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Adventure

TALBOT MUNDY · MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON · R.V. GERY
GEORGES SURDEZ · WILLIAM CORCORAN · DONALD BARR CHIDSEY
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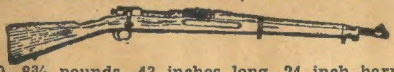

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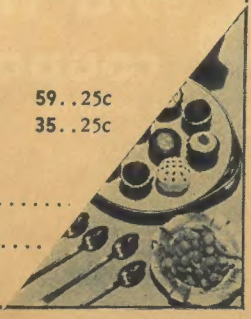

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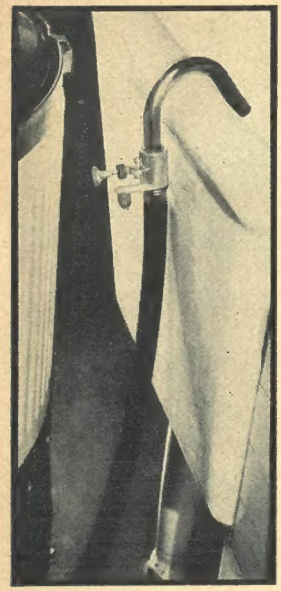

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A Story of the Indian

THE elephant rolled like a boat on a windless ground swell, and the sun beat down like hot brass. There was neither road nor trace of human footstep. The *mahout,* who was more than half asleep, allowed the elephant to choose his own way in the general direction of the rock ribbed hills. The all-observing kites (there were guns in the *howdah*) wheeled in widening circuits to discover what the quarry might be. And Chullunder Ghose sat upright underneath a black umbrella because he could not otherwise, with any comfort, hold the thing between his fat face and the sun. Larry O'Hara sat on the other side of the *howdah,* also upright.

"Sahib," said the babu, "Lalla Lingo is a man of many talents, without philosophy enough to cherish them beneath a sense of humor in the autocratic solitude he might enjoy. He owns a village whose inhabitants believe he is a god in an imported suit. It is an honor if he

Secret Service

CASE 13

By TALBOT MUNDY

takes their women. It is privilege to them to build his house, and grow his corn, and bring him meat. He has his books, his European education and an income that is ample for exotic needs. And yet he wants more. So he subsidizes murder—"

"We don't actually know that," O'Hara said.

"And he terrorizes the police and subsidizes them."

O'Hara interrupted—

"That is also something that we can't prove yet."

"And he employs a corps of propagandists, just like Julius Cæsar, to create a legend and a prophecy that he is destined to overthrow governments and to create a new dispensation, wherein everybody will keep what he already has but will also take what belongs to everybody else. He is madder than you and me."

"What's wrong with us?" O'Hara asked him, and the babu scratched his naked belly for a moment, opening his cotton shirt much wider to admit the faint breeze set up by the elephant's slow swaying.

"Self am timid person. I would run from a mouse if I dared. And the hell of it is that I can run, but I dare not; I might miss something. Philosophy and logic absolutely prove to me that governments are aggregations of amazing liars bent on graft and nothing else whatever. Nevertheless, I am riding with you on a silly-damn-dangerous expedition, drawing small pay and smaller expenses from the secret service of a government in whose stability I disbelieve, whose methods seem to me ridiculous, whose spirit is one of ingratitude, and for whose future I care nothing. I am thirsty, hot, uncomfortable and afraid. I am a damned fool. And I like it."

"All right. Why am I mad?"

"U. S. A. Americans would say you are a sucker," said the babu, fanning his naked stomach with a palm leaf. "Son of General O'Hara, sole heir to his fortune, handsome as a red haired Krishna —and as popular with women—youngest captain in the army, with a squadron of the Guides to make your throat choke when you look into their eyes and know exactly what they think of you; a career ahead—sport, brass bands, flattery, good-fellowship, promotion and all the fancy sideshows for the asking—is it not so? And here you are doing police work. On behalf of a secret service that will suck you dry and drop you like the dry skin of an orange, you go looking for a Hindu money lender who has probably been kidnaped and undoubtedly deserves it.

"If you rescue him—in the name of the law you and I will undoubtedly break in the process—that will give said despicable money lender opportunity to go on wringing five per cent a month from victims. If you do not rescue said specimen it probably will be because you will

get a bullet or a big knife in the belly. You are obviously crazy. And I would not swap you for a dozen viceroys and all their legislative councils, with the king and all his ministers thrown in to make it look like business."

CONVERSATION ended. And because even captains of the Guides have eccentricities, O'Hara pulled an ocharina from his pocket and made rather clever imitations of some Hindu temple music. Scrubby trees began to shut in the horizon with a misty camouflage of white thorn. They began to mount the foothills, until presently the elephant was plucking at the foliage of good green trees. Now and then they had to duck to avoid low branches. Larry O'Hara pulled his compass out and consulted a sketch map copied from the air force photo-survey.

"Lucky," he said, "if we reach his lair by midnight."

"No, no, unlucky!" said the babu. "Lalla Lingo is a bat at midnight. That is when he wakes up."

"This old elephant is all in," said O'Hara presently. "Another five miles and he'll lie down."

"Sooner than that, sahib. Sooner. I chose him purposely. Our Lalla Lingo has as many spies as there are women in the district. Had we taken a fast elephant, some woman would have hung a curtain in a certain way; some other woman would have set a signal on a housetop, visible from far off, where a farmer's wife would see it and perhaps pull down a rag of burlap from a tree, whose absence would be noticed by a woman watching in the hills; and she would hang her *sari* on a rock that can be seen by other women in a far off village, who would make another signal. So that almost before we had started Lalla Lingo would know there was possible danger. That is why I chose this old, slow elephant. Women are fools in a number of ways, including that they think a man is worth their trouble. But not even women are silly enough to suppose we are after Lalla Lingo on this relic. We are obviously after black-buck or a tiger."

"We've a damned long walk ahead of us," O'Hara answered, "in the darkness, over trails that a goat couldn't find."

"No. Self am adequately *compos mentis* to avoid unnecessary exercise. There is a village on the far side of this mountain."

"Yes, it's on the map. We must avoid it," said O'Hara. "Otherwise they'll signal Lalla Lingo."

"No, no. Am a bellyfull of brains that can imagine marvelously how to get your courage into action."

"What's your plan?" O'Hara asked him.

"*Non est.* Haven't one. Do you mistake me for a fathead general in Flanders studying a map to find out what the enemy is thinking? No, O'Hara sahib. This babu is opportunist *ad lib.* Am exponent of the theory that cats jump otherwise than as expected. Am ju-jitsuist of circumstance. If circumstances pull, I push them. If they push, I pull them. We are being sent to do a cheap job that the *politzei* have failed at. Let us not act like policemen."

"All right, babu-ji. I'll dress by you until we get in touch with Lalla Lingo. After that, you do as I say."

"Kindly do not ask too much then," said the babu. "I am talkative when there is nothing doing. How I do love silence when another man's mistake may send me to a disembowelment or torture!"

Trees ceased. On the right hand granite mountains leaned against the sky. The elephant mumbled, sighed and stood still. The *mahout* looked around and shrugged his shoulders.

"All change!" said the babu. Then he spoke to the *mahout* in the vernacular and the elephant knelt, subsiding like an emptying balloon. O'Hara buckled on an automatic and climbed out, leaving a shotgun and rifle in the *howdah.*

"Guns," said the babu, "are Stone

Age implements exaggerated. They are the tubes that suckle infantile analysis. Same diagnoses safety as a consequence of some one's death. However, I concede the pistol. Let that represent civilization."

O'Hara found a box of sandwiches. The babu spoke to the *mahout:*

"Take your elephant back to that water we passed. Let her bathe, rest, graze awhile. Go home at midnight. And remember: should you wish to find out what a merciless and unforgiving devil this babu can be, then tell where you have been! Do you understand me? You will say this sahib found another sahib who was also hunting, and the two shared one tent, getting drunk together. You will say this babu sang to them improper songs, this babu being also drunk. And you will say that, since that other sahib has three horses, they and this babu will later on return on horseback, after we have sobered up. Repeat that."

The *mahout* became word perfect after three attempts and presently the elephant went wearily downhill toward a pool, where a spring made gurgling music amid overarching trees. O'Hara gave the babu half the sandwiches. Together they drained a thermos bottle full of cold tea.

"Now what?" asked O'Hara. "As the crow flies it's a dozen miles. We aren't crows, and the miles are Irish—all around the ring, up and down hill."

"Come on," said the babu. "Let's get this part over with."

HE LED along a goat track that twisted and turned amid crags and granite boulders, through a notch between the shoulders of two mountains that was like a baker's oven. Fat man though he was, and middle aged, he walked fast underneath the bobbing black umbrella and O'Hara, who was tireless on a horse, was hard put to it to keep up. By the time they had descended on the far side of the notch, into a valley fed by three waterfalls that merged into a stream damned back to keep alive a mud walled village, O'Hara was breathless and becoming angry—as an Irish horseman usually does when the sweat and the flies increase the unaccustomed toil of walking. However, he stripped himself and sat beneath the smallest waterfall, and presently the babu did the same thing. They were naked, and good humored, when a few shy villagers approached and stared from a discreetly respectful distance.

The babu waved to them to keep their distance. Then he made a bundle, in his own shirt, of O'Hara's helmet, boots, clothes, underwear, and wrapped the whole lot tightly in the thirty yards of silk that formed his turban.

"Naked, sahib, we were born, so naked let us face death. Wear my *dhoti* as a tribute to your inhibitions. Self am nasty person from away off—fakir full of holiness. Buckle on your pistol underneath the *dhoti.* How about the sunstroke? Is your red hair thick enough to—"

"I can stick it," said O'Hara. "It's the morning sun that's dangerous."

The babu shook his long topknot and uncoiled it until it looked like tangled black tow. Then he plastered it with blue mud.

"Can you walk barefooted?"

"Hell, no."

"Take my sandals. Sahib, now you look as village women probably believe that Krishna did when he was playing with the milkmaids. You must tootle on your flutle for them."

"Was his hair red?" asked O'Hara.

"If it had been, then the women would have murdered him from jealousy of one another. But you are not Krishna. If you name yourself, they may begin to doubt you. Let them name you. What a woman misnames she believes in."

"How about the men?" O'Hara asked him.

"Sahib, a man's mother is a woman. All his days he secretly accepts the

woman's verdict, even though he mocks all women to their faces. We are right in blaming women for our madness. How mad are you?"

"Merely mad enough to follow your advice."

"But that is too sane. You must be as mad as the man who invented work. The most ignorant fool of a peasant knows that all the gods are stark mad; otherwise, how could the world be what it is?"

"Am I a god?"

"Of course you are. If you were a man, could you possibly get near Lalla Lingo? Wouldn't he either have you killed or run away from you? These villagers report to him all dangerous people. But a mad god is not dangerous, particularly when he travels with a holy person such as I. And if I were not holy, why should I be naked? Answer that one."

"Curse these horse flies!" said O'Hara.

"Come on, sahib. And remember that the man who overacts is like a frantic lover; he convinces nobody but himself. Remember to begin as gradually as our friend the money lender yielding to an application for a loan. If you begin by underdoing it, you easily can fire up. You may go your Irish limit when I get you into Lalla Lingo's presence. But if you save the money lender and don't get Lalla Lingo, I will never die with you again. For we shall die, I can assure you, if we make a mistake; and I am dead already, in anticipation."

It was difficult to watch Chullunder Ghose just then and not laugh. In his way he was magnificent. His coppery ivory belly bulged in front of him. He waddled with the pompously immodest swagger of a Roman emperor emerging from a bath, and added incongruity to that by carrying his bundle over-shoulder on a long stick. If the horse flies bit him, he appeared unconscious of it. If his nakedness embarrassed him, he kept that secret perfectly. He walked ahead, his elephantine buttocks suggesting lack of interest in anything but solid comfort, and his bare feet padding comfortably on a hard rock path that would have hurt the feet of men of half his weight.

O'Hara had the Irish gift of half divining purpose behind action. Irish generals have it. And he had another, even greater gift of confidence in any one whose virtues he had personally tested. It had been Chullunder Ghose who taught him all he knew of native modes of thought and native stupid-cunning. It had been Chullunder Ghose who ferreted a dozen cases for him and intrigued to make the secret service recognize him as a meritorious youngster, of whom great things might be expected. On the babu's advice he had specialized in doing rapidly and cheaply what would otherwise have cost enormous sums for special police or even troops. The babu's ingenuity made contacts for him. They were fast friends.

He had learned to trust unhesitatingly the tips the babu gave him; and Chullunder Ghose had never failed to trust him equally, when danger reached its crisis and a second's hesitation might destroy them both.

SO O'HARA walked, in nothing but a loincloth and a pair of sandals, almost unself-conscious, trying to remember how a madman acted. It occurred to him that, as a rule, not many madmen look the part. A little eccentricity was all he needed; and he had his ocharina. He could "tootle on the flutle" as the babu called it. So he walked until he was abreast of one small group of villagers, and not a hundred yards from another group that clustered in the gap between the heaped thorn branches that were used at night to close the village entrance. Then he "tootled" on the ocharina and danced a few steps to the tune.

The effect was instantaneous. Instead of staring from a distance, first the naked children ran and shrilled excited welcome, then their elders; even

the women set down water jars or paused at the grinding of meal to gather in the gateway. One man twisted up a wreath of green leaves and presented it; O'Hara set it on his red hair at a rakish angle; but he knew the ways of very holy people, so he made no acknowledgment of the gift. He noticed nobody. Chullunder Ghose, ahead of him, strode forward and compelled the little crowd to yield a fairway down its midst. O'Hara followed, staring at infinity, until they reached the great tree in the center of the village, where the dung cakes stood in big heaps and the embers of last night's fires still smoldered. There the babu sat down, but O'Hara stood, his naked back against the tree trunk and his right foot resting on his left knee. He resumed his music on the ocharina and the villagers swarmed all around them, until presently the elders squatted in the dust, potbellied children weaving in and out among them. Then the questioning began—

"Who is he?"

"How do I know?" said the babu. "What do I care? Neither do I know who I am. What is that?" He pointed at the sky. "What is it? Of what is it made? At the end of it, what is beyond that?"

Silence. None but very holy persons ever use such arrogance or speak such impenetrable riddles. It was prosperous, as an Indian village goes, and it was rich in cattle, as the dung cakes witnessed; but it knew no more exciting entertainment than the stories of the wandering mendicants, or than the rare, and now and then expensive visits of such holy men as deigned, for inscrutable reasons, to accept hospitality. A very suspicious village, it delighted to be talked to and not questioned, though it asked as many questions as its elders could invent.

Opposite the babu, in a shrine between two mud walled huts, a village godlet, very crudely carved of wood and plentifully smeared with red and yellow pigment, stared with owl eyes made of colored glass. It was a small shrine hardly bigger than a beehive, set on a square mud pedestal protected by a thatched roof. Suddenly the babu jumped to his feet. He made incomprehensible gestures. He strode through the midst of the villagers, seized a dung cake, broke it into pieces, and then laid the pieces as a tribute on the threshold of the shrine.

O'Hara, watching him with the alertness of a conjurer's assistant, guessing rather than detecting any signal, put the ocharina to his lips. He began to improvise. Then suddenly the laughter in him almost broke bounds—almost wrecked all chance of reaching Lalla Lingo. Laughter would have scandalized the village elders to the point where scandal and suspicion are the same thing, and a message or a signal would have gone to the outlaw chieftain that same minute.

Naked, enormous, incredibly agile, and thoroughly versed in the sacred traditional posturings of Hindu gods, as represented by the temple images and imitated by the nautch, Chullunder Ghose began the Dance of Siva—danced it to a tune invented by O'Hara that was more than faintly like the strains of temple music. Absolute absurdity ran riot, emphasized by the exact perfection of his technique. He was as solemn as a graven image, and as lively as a cat on hot bricks. His enormous belly wobbled and his torso writhed and twisted. Arms as thick as some men's legs did snaky movements that would not have shamed a nautch girl. Faultless rhythm governed him. He made no errors in a ritual that uses intricacy to express the alternating tides of life and death.

He was ridiculous, sublime and monstrous—to the villagers a marvel. None had seen such dancing. If his belly heaved like blacksmith's bellows, and the sweat ran streaming off him as he came back to his seat beside the tree, that merely stirred more village wonder

that a holy one should take the trouble to instruct, and edify and give delight.

It was fifteen minutes before Chullunder Ghose could breathe again without laboring, and all that while O'Hara kept the ocharina going. He had to resist old habit. Jazz was what he usually played—jazz and the latest popular refrains that men in camp prefer to the politely highbrow stuff. However, villagers in India can stomach repetition—possibly prefer it—and he kept them silent and intent until the sun went down below the mountain and the women lighted the fires in purple shadow.

THEN the cattle came home. Presently the villagers brought milk, and pulse, and steaming vegetables faintly flavored with a pinch of curry. It occurred to no one that such holy people might prefer to sleep indoors, so there was nothing said about accommodations. And it certainly occurred to no one that the strong men of the village would be up all night and toiling. But the babu's plan, from nothing but a spark of humor, was developing. At milking time he had a chance to whisper to O'Hara, under cover of the lowing of the cattle and the milling of the hoofs in pungent dust:

"After sunset, sahib, there can be no signaling to Lalla Lingo, unless they use fire signals, and I don't believe they do. However, if they do, we'll know it. It is only what we don't know that is deadly. What we have to do now is to cash in on our credit, same as get-rich-quick financiers."

"I'm chilly," said O'Hara.

"Don't sneeze, sahib. Gods don't do it. Press your upper lip and think about whisky and soda."

In the crimson glow of bonfire light beneath the big tree, with the eyes of all the village shining in a semicircle, and the women in the background crooning hymns as old as India, he sat down beside O'Hara on a mat provided by the village.

"Who is Lalla Lingo?" he demanded suddenly. And such a silence fell as only happens when a great dread grips the consciousness of many men at once.

"I have asked who is he?"

Anger—the scalding and insolent anger of sanctity shook him. His voice was ominous with threat unspoken but incorporated in its resonance. A shudder swept his audience as if a cold, weird wind had struck them.

"Holy One, we may not speak of him," said some one.

"Why not?"

"Lest we perish."

"If I curse you, what then?"

"Holy One, we are a little village, and we are poor men, all of us. We have done no evil. What is it to you that we should be silent about that which concerns us in no way at all?"

"So that is it? Am I to say to Lalla Lingo that this village is not concerned about him? Shall I say to Lalla Lingo that ye sullenly refused to take us to him, each in a litter borne on strong men's shoulders? What then?"

"Holy One, we dare not. In the night he turns himself into a devil, having dark wings, and his eyes see all that happens."

"Did you think I do not know it?" asked the babu. "Also do his ears not hear what happens? What will Lalla Lingo do to you by daylight, if he hears you in the night time saying, 'Nay, for he is no concern of ours,' and 'Nay, he is not fit to know these unknown holy ones who visit us'?"

"If we should send a messenger," said some one, "he would not return—since none may go to *him* by night."

Somewhere in the darkness, out beyond the dancing crimson firelight, a woman cried out and would not be silenced. She was beating her breasts.

"Is she a widow?" asked the babu.

"Holy One, a new young widow."

"Bring her to me."

Sullenly the woman came, between

two male relatives; they cuffed her into silence, hustling her around the outskirts of the little crowd until she stood beside the tree in shadow, clad in black cotton—almost nothing of her visible except her eyes between the trembling fingers with which she covered them.

"Tell it to me," said the babu.

Silence fell again like something that had weight; and the crack of the fire was startling, but it did not break the silence. Suddenly the woman wailed and beat her breasts again, then burst into a torrent of lament. Her words, sob choked, so crowded one another that the babu could not distinguish them. But she could see his face in firelight, and his big, mild eyes in some way calmed her, so that presently short scraps of what she said became intelligible:

"Widow — widow — widow — do you hear me? Childless—and now no child, ever. He did no harm. He did what they told him. He took a message—took it in the night time." Unintelligible torrents followed, and then, "Some say my man found him changed into a devil. Some say that he ate him. Some say that he turned him into a hyena. But he came not back to me. Oh, ay-ee-ay-ee-ay-ee—"

She buried her face in her dingy *sari* and was hustled away by the men, who were ashamed that any widow of their household should have stood in the presence of strangers and have spoken to them.

Suddenly the babu let loose such a yell that all the women in the gloom beyond the firelight screamed, and some ran:

"Now will ye do as I say? Idiots! Should Lalla Lingo turn you into tapeworms in the bellies of abominable dogs, how lightly he would let you off for being such fools! Who are *we?* I say, who *are* we? Speak up!"

"Nay, we know not," said a village elder.

"Yet ye dare withhold us from him? Ye sit still like lousy hens that hatch out chickens for the crows to steal—and build not litters for us? Let your women mock you! Ye have heard a widow tell her story. Who shall count your widows if ye order not your strong young men to carry us to Lalla Lingo?"

DRUDGES though the village women are, they sway their men by flattery and subtlety that all slaves learn. There was a murmur in the gloom beyond the firelight, swelling until bolder women's voices rose above it. In another moment there was tumult, every woman shouting to her man, and each telling her to hold her peace; until the babu roared out—

"*Silence!*"

Nothing could be heard then but the footfall of the sleepy cattle in the dust and the excited chittering of bats.

"And now what?" asked the babu.

"In the morning," said a village elder.

"Ye may bid the sun await the morning!"

"It is too far," said an elder.

"O thou measurer! Then measure trouble!" said the babu.

That same elder shouted to the women to get busy making litters, and the babu whispered to O'Hara while the menfolk quarreled as to who was strong enough to lay a shoulder to the poles:

"O'Hara sahib, this babu like any other fool can get you into danger. Can you get us out of it? This Lalla Lingo looks like hot stuff."

"So are these mosquitoes," said O'Hara. "They're like fighting cocks; they've spurs on. Can you borrow me a *sari?*"

"Sahib, are you superstitious? This is Case 13 that you and I have worked on."

"Yes, I'm superstitious. I believe in the chills and malaria. Get me a *sari.*"

"Sahib, if we fail—"

"Then we'll be scuppered, that's all, like the money lender."

"It is not all. Lalla Lingo will punish this village unless you first capture

or kill him. How the devil shall we do it? This abominable babu has a fit of willies."

"Comes of being naked. Get two *saris*."

"Damn! If you again say *saris* to me I will go home!"

"Get 'em first, though."

So the babu remonstrated with the women who were twisting withes on long poles by the aid of firelight. Would they suffer two such holy mendicants to travel naked in the night time? Would they bring such shame upon a hospitable village? And the women loaded them with *saris,* begging only that their sons and husbands should be sent home safe at daybreak.

It was two hours before midnight when the thorns were at last dragged away from the village gate and the procession started. Eight men grunted underneath the babu's litter; four men bore O'Hara; two men led and two followed. Starlight, powdered on a purple sky, made even the deepest shadow faintly luminous. There was a drone of insects. Steady breathing of the litter bearers and the padding of the naked feet on raw rock and on dusty cattle path combined into rhythmic harmony that tempted sleep, and presently Chullunder Ghose lay snoring like a regiment in barracks. It was long past midnight when O'Hara wakened him:

"No noise now. Look at this."

There lay the skeletons of fifty head of cattle, in a shallow basin formed by two spurs of a high cliff. An enormous full moon, looking like a golden mirror resting on the summit of a mountain, flooded light into a pass between two granite shoulders. On the left hand lay what recently had been a village.

"Only fifty miles from railhead," said O'Hara, "and not even a rumor of it reached us."

Blackened ruins, ashes and a wide black circle where a thorn-mud-and-stone ring fence had stood. Three, six, nine jackals whimpering and snooting amid débris. One skull—probably a woman's—lying, broken, less than twenty paces from the track. Another, and another nearby. Part of a human backbone. On a blackened tree trunk and its lower branches, portions of the arm bones and the thighs of some one crucified and left to feed kites.

"Lalla Lingo," said O'Hara, "must have found a new way of imposing silence. Ask our stretcher bearers. I daren't; they would twig my accent."

So the babu bullied them and threatened, coaxed and promised. But the more he questioned them the stupider they grew, until he gave it up at last. They knew nothing—not even the name of the village. They were so in dread of Lalla Lingo's name that they declared now they had never heard of him. Protesting they had lost the way, they refused to go forward until O'Hara played his ocharina and the babu sang an unexpectedly falsetto hymn to spirits of the rocks and streams. Then they shouldered the litters again and hurried as if ghouls were after them.

ABOUT three in the morning, or nearly that, they reached a narrowing ravine that lay in shadow and the bearers once more halted, vowing they would rather die than go one step farther.

"Sahib," said the babu, "you and I are lunatics. This business needs cavalry, two generals, a mountain battery and lots of ambulances."

"Dismiss the baggage train," O'Hara answered. "I saw hoofprints on the track before we entered shadow. If we get ourselves some horses—"

"Go home! Shoo! To hell with you!" the babu ordered, and the stretcher bearers turned and fled, not pausing to be praised. O'Hara took charge, dressed himself, stood straight backed in a khaki uniform and helmet.

"Chilly, babu-ji?"

"Have wind up."

"Me too; so it's fifty-fifty. Drape yourself in all the *saris*. They'll come off quick. Bring along your turban; we

may need it. Cache your shirt and *dhoti* here; we'll find 'em on the way back."

At the far end of the narrowing ravine ahead of them a light burned dimly. It was difficult to guess whether it came from door or window, or from a tent, or was merely a lantern in the open, set to mark some rendezvous. Conceivably it was a trap. A man who dealt in wholesale murder probably would not set lights to guide his enemies.

"I smell horse," said O'Hara, sniffing.

"Then for God's sake, silence, sahib!"

"Wait here—in that shadow."

O'Hara counted eighty paces forward into velvet darkness. Then he heard a horse snort. Ten more paces and he felt his way into the midst of five mares tethered to a picket rope. He waited. One mare missed him with a vicious hind leg, tried to bite him and then squealed. A man's voice swore at her in Hindustani. Some one drew near to investigate. O'Hara waited for him, saw his outline, sprang and sent him spinning with a haymaker under the jaw. He pounced on him—a *syce*—the smell was unmistakable. He dragged the fellow's turban off and made a noose of it around his throat, then spoke at last:

"Come. Make a sound and I'll choke you."

Counting paces, he returned to where the babu waited, jerking at the noose to keep the *syce* obedient.

"Whose horses?" he demanded.

"One mare is Lalla Lingo sahib's," said the *syce*. Then he mentioned three other names, none known to O'Hara, but the babu had recognized them:

"Younger sons of rich men, sahib. Mischievous young idlers, all in debt to Moti Lal the money lender."

Suddenly O'Hara drew his pistol, thrust its muzzle in the *syce's* face.

"Want to die?" he asked him.

The *syce* pleaded. O'Hara dragged him away into the moonlight, tore a leaf out of his notebook, wrote and folded it. He strode back.

"Can you read? No? Well, I've written that the bearer is presumably not guilty of a crime if he arrives at railhead before noon. Can you find your way?"

"Yes, sahib."

He dragged him back toward the picket line, the babu following.

"Which mare can carry most weight? I can't see them. That one? And which are the next best? That and that one? Take your own and ride until you find a burra sahib in a camp near railhead. Give him that message. If, by noon, some mounted men have started on their way to meet me, you go scot-free."

"*Atcha, sahib.*"

"Hurry!"

The *syce* mounted and was gone in a moment.

"Risky," said O'Hara, "but we have to take long chances. Anyhow, he probably won't come back here to trouble us. And now we've horses, so we're fit for something. Get on that one."

O'Hara mounted one mare, led the other. He was in his element; the Guides are trained to ride in border mist or darkness, into unknown country. Like the fishermen on fog bound coasts, they get an extra sense; and as the sailor somehow feels his ship without exactly knowing how he does it, they draw nervous intuition from the horse.

He led along the narrowing ravine until the light showed plainly as a lantern hanging from a wall; but whether it were rock face or a house wall he could not tell. He drew rein until the babu overtook him. He sniffed at the air. He listened.

"Can't be a village. No dogs."

BUT a dog barked suddenly, and twenty others yelped in chorus. Then the moon rose high enough to show the roofs of a fair sized village like a fortress on

the left hand side of the ravine, protected by a sheer cliff with a stone wall on its upper edge. O'Hara turned toward the right hand, where the shadow was the deeper for the moonlight opposite. The horses' keener senses found a path: he let them follow that until they brought up at a stake-and-rock enclosure reeking of goats and cow dung. It was empty. He hitched the horses in the deepest shadow, inside the enclosure, where their hoofs, if they were restless, would be muffled by the soft dirt.

They returned then to the bed of the ravine. It narrowed rapidly toward the lantern light; and gradually, as the moon suffused the dark sky and the darker outlines of the hills, there appeared the roofs of at least a hundred huts, set high up, like the nests of mud wasps, on the steep slope on the left hand.

"Krishna!" exclaimed the babu. "Dekko!" He clutched O'Hara's arm and pointed.

Nine men, their leader carrying a light, passed in single file beneath the lantern at the end of the ravine. They tramped uphill into the moonlight, into the village. Before they passed entirely out of view, the moonlight silvered the steel of their weapons. There was utter darkness where the babu and O'Hara waited. Suddenly the babu gripped O'Hara's arm again.

Some one was coming toward them along the ravine, running full pelt. They could hear but could not see him. And beneath the lantern, blacker than the darkness, outlined by the dark rays, something like a specter—like a huge bat, as big as a man—stood, or hung suspended. It swayed. It had a flat head, faintly luminous, and weird, dark wings that beat the night but looked mysteriously small. A wing reached up and seemed to touch the lantern. Then the light went out.

The runner's breath broke on the silence in short stabs of effort. His hurrying feet struck the earth not more than fifty feet away. O'Hara moved into an even deeper shadow. Suddenly he hurled himself at the runner. He tackled him by the legs. He threw him. The thud of their fall made more noise than the runner's scream as the babu jumped and also landed on him, almost crushing him to death. He lay apparently unconscious for a minute, while O'Hara searched him for a weapon, but he found none. Then they dragged their victim to a mud walled shed near which they had left the horses. Most of the roof had fallen in, but it was moderately safe to strike a light, if they were careful.

"Inside your helmet, sahib!"

So O'Hara used his helmet, and the match light showed them a lean, wiry Hindu of the household servant class, but of a caste too high to work for white men. He was well clothed, in clean white cotton; but he had no pockets, and in the folds of his loincloth there was no letter or anything to explain his errand. Chullunder Ghose pulled at his turban. It came off. He unwrapped it.

"Dekko! Strike another match, O'Hara sahib. Next time let us go after a pig. These humans are too unsqueamish."

In the babu's hand there lay a human ear. It had been partly cut and partly torn off; some of the whiskered skin of a man's cheek had come away with it. The blood seemed dry, or almost so, but the folds of the turban had soaked up some of it.

"That may happen to us. It may happen to us," said the babu. "Let us go and get the military." Then he sighed and changed his voice. "O'Hara sahib, if I ever talk like that again, you may tell the whole world what you know about me and have me put in prison. Fear is no excuse for cowardice. I am a coward, but I won't admit it."

O'Hara chose to wait until the prisoner regained his senses, helped to it by ministrations from the babu, who seized the man's elbows and pumped new air into his lungs. He was presently sitting

upright. And by then Chullunder Ghose was master of himself again—inventive and imaginative, expert in the art of snatching chances.

"Show yourself for just a second, sahib."

O'Hara struck a match and blew it out. The prisoner's dazzled eyes got one glimpse of a military uniform. Then, in utter darkness, in the man's own language, from the babu:

"Tell the truth now swiftly before somebody mistakes you for a *badmash*. All this place has been surrounded by the military, who are waiting to attack at daylight. Why are you here? Why is there a man's ear in your turban? Whose ear is it?"

"It is Moti Lal's ear."

"The money lender's? He who has vanished?"

"Yes, I am his servant. Sahibs, do not harm me. I will tell all, having done no wrong. It happened thus—that Moti Lal, my master, vanished. Then word came by the mouth of one of Lalla Lingo's women, saying that the price of his life is fifty thousand rupees, silver, to be brought to Lalla Lingo's camp by one man riding on a mule and not accompanied or followed. That is too much money; but his wife, my mistress, managed to collect the half of it and sent me, who am trusted. So I came to Lalla Lingo, and I gave it to him, six days since. But he said to bring the other twenty-five thousand. If not, said he, Moti Lal shall suffer. But I answered that there was no more money."

THE man paused as if searching memory, but he was frightened, thinking he had said too much already. Chullunder Ghose subtly encouraged him. It was an easy guess what thoughts would cross a man's mind at a time like that.

"And you did not dare to go to the police. You knew that Lalla Lingo has no cause to fear policemen, who are corrupted by him. And you knew he would carry out his threat to torture Moti Lal. Is that not so?"

"It is so, sahib. But I knew not what to say or do, having told the truth—that there is no more money."

Again he hesitated. But one of the three mares kicked, and another squealed. Those were comforting sounds: they assured him it was true about the military cordon all around the village. He was in safe hands, if he spoke up—very rough hands if he did not speak. And it is more tempting to talk in the dark than in daylight. He continued:

"Lalla Lingo said to me that there are three young men who owe my master money; and he named them, and the sums they owe, the total being thirty thousand rupees. Then he sent me back with this word: that he will accept, in full discharge of ransom, all the documents relating to those loans."

"And did you bring them?" asked O'Hara.

"Nay, I found it was impossible. My master, Moti Lal, had pledged those papers with another money lender as security for money he himself had borrowed. And that other money lender would not part with them, however many people pleaded and however many promises were made. So, fearing for my master's life, my mistress sent me back to ask for better terms, that we can fulfill. This night I came."

"And—"

"There in Lalla Lingo's house were those three creditors. They are all the sons of *zemindars*. Their names are Hari Gopal, Ganpat Rai and Prabat Kinanda."

"Wastrels! Well I know them," said the babu piously. In darkness one might easily mistake him for a moralist. "No doubt they borrowed without their parents' knowledge. Doubtless they agreed to act as spies and decoys and informers for Lalla Lingo if he would get them back their promissory notes."

"Sahibs, they are bad men. This is what happened. Lalla Lingo went into

another room. I heard a groan. He came back. He threw on the table that which you have taken from me. 'Take your master's left ear,' he commanded. It was raw and bleeding, sahibs. 'Say that unless I get those papers by tomorrow night, his right ear goes the way of that one. Then his nose next. Then his left eye. *R-r-ruksa!* And they laughed, those three. I understood them. To prevent my giving evidence against them, they intend to have me slain by Lalla Lingo's men when I have run my errand."

"Are they in the house now?" asked O'Hara.

"They are alone with him in the house, except that Moti Lal is in the back room. Lalla Lingo trusts no servants near him when he holds a conference."

Chullunder Ghose threw valiant resolution to the winds:

"O'Hara sahib, there is one of you against four desperados. But we have horses." He spoke English lest the prisoner should understand him. "If we take this witness now, and ride for help, we can do a good job and capture them all. But if you go forward, you will have to kill at least three men. Those young scoundrels are amateurs. Hysteria will make them fight. Whereas Lalla Lingo, being a professional, will take advantage of their fighting and himself escape. So, even if you don't get killed, you will lose the all-important man. And besides, I warn you that the noise of fighting will inevitably summon all his ruffians from the village."

"There's the owner of that ear to think of," said O'Hara.

"This ear," said the babu, "is undoubtedly the deaf one that he turned toward the mortgagees who could not pay their interest. I take no pity on him."

But O'Hara took the prisoner by the arm.

"Go back to Lalla Lingo," he commanded. "Tell him that on your way you met a man who brings those promissory notes. But the man is afraid of the dark; he won't move another step until sunrise; and he wants Moti Lal brought to him, because he fears treachery."

"Nay, nay, sahib!"

"Why not?"

"He has turned himself into a bat! He is a black magician! He will turn me into—"

"Chup!" The babu slapped him on the mouth. "This officer has red hair. That is absolutely a protection against magic. You shall have a look at it. Permit me." He groped and removed O'Hara's helmet. "Sahib, let me have your pocket knife. So—"

Then he whispered to O'Hara while he sawed off a forelock:

"Oh, you Irish redhead! I would rather try to make a tiger eat vegetables than teach you discretion! What now? This is Case 13, I tell you! Have you no religion?"

"I've an idea," said O'Hara. "Give him the hair. Then talk to him. Persuade him to obey me. Hurry up. It'll soon be daylight."

Terror lent the babu eloquence, his wits being always sharpest when he dreaded what he had to do. Disobedience, he said, meant being flogged by Indian soldiers who, he swore, were all around them in the darkness. But obedience meant a handsome cash reward as well as rescue for his money lender master.

"Will you leave him there, bleeding, in pain, to lose his right ear also, and his left eye?"

Presently the man consented and O'Hara carefully instructed him, Chullunder Ghose adding comment when O'Hara's fluency in that speech failed him.

THEN O'Hara led the way along the pitch dark, narrowing ravine, the moonlit outlines of the hilltops guiding him. A momentary touch of nervousness made him draw his automatic, but when he had cocked it he pushed

it back into the holster; after that he walked almost casually, whistling very softly to himself. He trusted Chullunder Ghose to keep the prisoner from escaping in the darkness. They—the babu coming last—were close on his heels when he reached the extinguished lantern and discovered that a track led past it, upward, between high rocks. He could hear the prisoner's teeth like castanets, and he could hear the babu whisper to him about red hair and its absolute protection against magic.

It was even darker between those rock walls, but the ascending track was narrow; one could feel the way by touching the rocks on either hand. And there were no loose stones; they made no more noise than the wind did, rustling amid dry leaves where the vegetation had found foothold. They emerged on to a ledge shaped like a horseshoe, hidden from below by a natural fringe of tumbled rock that threw the near half of the level surface into shadow. But the moon brilliantly lighted the farther portion; it whitened the wall and it poured through the open door of Lalla Lingo's house, that stood exactly in the middle of the ledge, some fifty feet away.

"Go ahead, you," O'Hara whispered.

The babu shoved the frightened prisoner, who hung back. He was panic stricken. O'Hara decided to give him time to get a grip on himself, although daylight was not far off. Too, delay gave him time to study the situation. So he lay still, conning the small thatched house, with a shadowy, long shed behind it. In the front room, through the open door, he could make out the legs of four men seated around a table, playing some sort of game by the light of a candle stuck into a bottle.

Suddenly the babu began laughing. He made almost no sound, but his ribs shook and he nudged O'Hara. Then he whispered to the man who crouched in dread between them.

"Look, you! There is all his magic! That is how he turns himself into a bat! A college gown—a mortarboard hat! They are either the ones he wore at Cambridge or else he stole them from a bishop! Do you see them, on that chair back? Now are you afraid of magic?"

But the man was terrified. O'Hara had to twist his arm to make him conscious of something else than numbness.

"Stand up," he commanded. "Walk straight forward and announce yourself. Then give that message. If you hesitate, I'll put a bullet through you."

He obeyed, like a man in a dream. He was like a phantom. He made no sound as he moved, in total darkness, yet distinct against the moonlight and the open doorway, probably invisible from within the house but disturbingly easy to see where O'Hara and the babu lay; it made them both feel as if they were visible. The babu whispered:

"Self have wind up. I can't stand this. Let us do something, for God's sake!"

"Come on."

Swiftly, through the darkest of the shadow, well to one side of the V-shaped path of light from the open door, O'Hara led. They passed their wretched messenger, and he never knew it. They crouched so close to the veranda that they could see the terror on the man's face as he approached the three low wooden steps and tried to force himself to speak. His voice broke. It was like the wail of an animal.

"Lalla Lingo, sahib—there is news, O Excellency!"

A wooden chair scraped backward on a board floor. There was an oath, and Lalla Lingo came and stood on the veranda. He struck a match. He lighted a lantern that hung from a rafter. It almost revealed the babu's *sari* wrapped bulk. He had to crowd against O'Hara to avoid the light's path.

"You, eh?" Lalla Lingo's voice was sharp—suspicious. "What is it." He looked handsome in the lantern-light. His good blue suit was well cut and his tall, lean figure hinted that his sinews were like whipcord. He had a pointed, black beard, scrupulously cared for. Very white teeth showed maliciously beneath

a black mustache, whose points turned upward. He had a delicate, well formed nose; but his eyes were rather close together. He had donned a dark blue turban since he laid the cap and gown aside.

"Speak. What is it?" he repeated; his hands were behind him.

The stammered answer irritated him. The tale went lamely. Moti Lal's unfortunate factotum trembled so that he jumbled up his message.

"You are lying! You treacherous dog, I know a lie before it leaves a man's lips! Who told you to say that?"

"No one, sahib! No one!"

"Why then did you say it?"

SUDDENLY he sprang. He had a saber in his right hand. He cleared the wooden steps and lunged at the messenger's throat. He missed him. He pursued. His victim vanished into shadow. Presently he came back, brandishing his saber, muttering to himself. O'Hara nudged the babu—

"Both together!"

Lalla Lingo staggered backward as O'Hara's left fist struck him on the jaw. He did not fall; two arms like a gorilla's seized him, crushed him so that he could not cry out, lifted him, spun him—and then hurled him to the earth where darkness, between two bushes, seemed as solid as the earth that jarred his bones. And then the babu sat on him.

"He has now no breath, O'Hara sahib. Gag him carefully, or he will cheat the hangman! Leave his nose free."

So O'Hara gagged him with his own blue turban. Then he pulled the *saris* off the babu, tore them into strips and trussed him swiftly—hands, feet, knees. The babu tested each knot—

"For I tell you, if he gets loose, I would rather milk a tigress in a den of tigers!"

"Blood's on the saber," O'Hara whispered. "Curse his soul, he killed our—"

"Sh-h-h!"

Boards of the veranda creaked to a footstep, then another.

"Where are you, Lalla Lingo? What has happened?" a voice asked in Hindustani.

"Come here. Come and help me," said the babu irritably.

Spurs of moments usually pricked his genius; the voice resembled Lalla Lingo's sufficiently to deceive an unsuspecting man, and darkness did the rest.

"I'm coming. Wait, I'll bring the lantern."

One man, dressed in Jodhpore riding breeches and long, jingling silver spurs came carrying the lantern, swinging it. He seemed a bit drunk. Possibly the night air fortified the fumes of whisky. But there were two other men on the veranda watching him and they were armed with automatics. So was this one; he had a pistol tucked into his cummerbund.

O'Hara crawled around the bush. Chullunder Ghose made sounds to guide the fellow with the lantern.

"Where are you? Where the devil are you?"

Out of shadow, with the saber, suddenly O'Hara knocked the lantern from his hand and smashed it. But he drew his pistol and fired it three times before O'Hara could get at him and beat him to his knees with a blow on the neck from the back of the saber.

"Jiminy!" The babu jumped on him. In less than sixty seconds they had him gagged and tied securely in the coils of his sixty-yard turban. But by that time the two others had slammed the house door. "Jiminy Krishna! Now we get the hell from here! Those shots will summon Lalla Lingo's cutthroats!"

"They've a long way to come," said O'Hara. "Let's look for the money lender."

"Sahib, I am naked!"

"Come on—take the saber. Crash that front door."

Charging into moonlight, they were tolerably easy targets. But the door and the windows were closed, and the shutters were up. No shots were fired at them. They crashed the door to-

gether—weight, strength, speed. Its lock broke and the hinges burst. It went down, inward, like a clap of thunder. Darkness—some one had blown the candle out. Inside, they sprang to right and left to avoid being silhouetted against the moonlight.

An automatic spat, and missed the babu. He grabbed a chair—hurled it. It crashed in the darkness and somebody swore. O'Hara hurled himself against the voice. An automatic spat again, twice; a bullet singed his cheek. He charged in, driving with his right fist, struck a man and heard him crash into a wall—struck again, twice; short, stabbing blows that hurt his knuckles. A man fell at his feet and he heard the automatic clatter on the floor. He groped for it and found it.

"Babu-ji—a pistol for you."

But the babu did not hear him. He had crashed an inner door; it went down as O'Hara spoke. O'Hara followed him—scrimmage work, swift as a play on the football field; he could just see the babu's outline.

"Krishna!" The babu almost screamed as something touched his naked stomach. He became a spasm of energy, with the concrete will to live. He flailed at some one with his head, feet, hands and saber—struck him with the hilt and followed up—grabbed him and let the saber go and crushed him.

"Shoot, O'Hara sahib!"

BUT O'Hara struck a match and saw the fourth man wilting in the babu's crushing grip. He lighted a lantern, kicked away an automatic that the man had dropped, glanced around at a room lined with books, then returned to the outer room in time to catch the third man, who was already halfway to the front door, crawling on his hands and knees.

"Get back inside there! All right, babu-ji, let your man go, I've got 'em covered. Now then, where's the money lender?"

Silence. Two terrified sons of landed gentry glancing at each other, each afraid the other might betray by word or gesture what they both knew. Paper on the table, pens, ink. Chullunder Ghose picked up a sheet of the paper.

"Sahib, I will bet you they have tortured him! This is a receipt acknowledging full payment. They have tried to make him sign it. See here—cigaret ends. I will bet they burned him with them!"

"Find him," said O'Hara.

There was a door between two sets of bookshelves. It was locked—no key. Chullunder Ghose seized a heavy chair and smashed a panel, groped inside, seized the frame of the door with both hands, set his leg against the wall and tore the lock out by the roots.

"I told you!"

He stooped, raised something heavy, dragged it into the lantern light. The money lender's earless corpse lay grinning at them, with its tongue between its teeth. It was grinning with agony. Both hands had been burned by cigaret ends in a dozen places.

"Why the deuce did they kill him?" O'Hara wondered.

"Sahib, he died of shock, and fright, and maybe apoplexy."

"Cover him," O'Hara ordered. "Quick now. Roll him in something. Use that curtain." Then he grinned at the prisoners. "You'd probably like to be shot dead. That's a bit too easy for you. If you disobey, or if you hesitate, I'm going to torture you like hell by breaking a knee-cap with a bullet. One of you carry the corpse. Step lively!"

Twisting the other man's arm, he forced him out to the veranda. He and the babu listened, smiling grimly at the hideous disgust of a rather high caste man compelled to touch defilement. Any corpse is loathesome to a well bred Hindu. But a money lender's!

There were no sounds. But the stars were paling and the moon looked wan; it would be daybreak presently.

"Don't trust luck. This is Case 13. remember," said the babu, shivering; his naked body felt the first chill of the changing wind that precedes daylight.

Suddenly the prisoner who had no burden opened his mouth wide and yelled for help. His yell was cut short by O'Hara's fingers. His eyes were half out of his head. O'Hara shook him.

"I will fill your mouth with stable sweepings if you make another sound! Do you believe me?"

The belief was borne in on him by vehemence. O'Hara led into the dark where Lalla Lingo lay beside the other prisoner, and him they loaded on the second man. The babu carried Lalla Lingo upside down to give him something else to think about than mischief.

"To the horses. You lead, babu-ji. I'll spell you when you need it."

He brought up the rear, impatient because of the waning starlight, angry even with the babu for not going faster. He was watchful, alert, his ears pricked, automatic ready in his right hand. Panic almost seized him when the babu stopped in total darkness, at the top of the path between the high rock walls.

"I have stumbled on that poor fool messenger! He feels dead."

"Dammit! All right. Swap loads. Here, you—give me yours and pick that corpse up! Bloody, is it? What do I care? Pick it up, or—"

Forward again, stumbling in a hurry downhill, nothing visible except the rocks above them and the stars. Breathless into the ravine, and then the babu:

"Snappy, sahib! Look—see—lanterns! They have heard the shooting!"

In a line along the track above the village to their right hand twenty lanterns danced like fireflies. But the horses were not far off, and the loaded prisoners were sure now of O'Hara's malice; he would torture them, they knew it, if they disobeyed. Breathless, meek, perhaps still hoping for fortune to come and rescue them, they submitted to having their hands tied. They were pitched into the saddle; their turbans were used to tie their legs beneath the horses' bellies. One was forced to take the money lender on his knees; the other had to take the servant's body, and both bodies were lashed to their legs and around their waists. Chullunder Ghose mounted the strongest mare; O'Hara hoisted and the babu pulled the trussed up prisoner across the saddlebow. O'Hara hove up Lalla Lingo, gagged and half conscious, on to the shoulders of the one remaining mare, then swung into the saddle.

"Forward—take it easy!"

"They are coming, sahib!"

"Take it easy! Save the horses for a spurt when we know we need it."

"It is Case 13, I tell you!"

"Silence!"

Shouting and a swirl of dancing lanterns on their right hand. Then a drum beat. Dim light in a pale sky, glistening on fleecy, thin clouds. Even the ravine was only dim now. They were visible. A rifle spat from near the lanterns, echoed by several more, and the echoes were swallowed by yells of anger as a hundred men rushed closer.

"Ride—gallop!"

As the sun rose they heard the last echo on the walls of the ravine.

"Trot march—easy—walk march. You can hold a horse back to a donkey if you load him heavily enough. We're safe now. How are you feeling, babu?"

"Am hungry. Also naked. Am embarrassed."

"Satyr, that's what you are!"

"Nay, not so. I am a rather stout old gentleman enjoying memories. Consider this, O'Hara sahib. I was once a babu drawing twenty-five rupees a month for adding figures in a ledger. I thought I was fortunate."

"Now what do you call yourself?"

"A lucky lunatic! I like it. Let me have your shirt or something else, O'Hara sahib. This immodesty shocks even me. And I must find a new religion also. Thirteen, and a Friday. Dammit, I will be a skeptic-incredulatist from now on!"

By GEORGES SURDEZ

BY SPECIAL REQUEST

A Story of the Foreign Legion

THE bugle call ended on a prolonged, shrill note.

A company of the Foreign Legion, forming the spearhead of the mobile group operating in the Branes sector of the Riff front, had reached its objective. The ruins of Bou-Mabrouk, the blockhouse stormed by the Riffi on the preceding day, formed a quadrangle of tumbling walls shattered by explosions and blackened by smoke.

Surrounding this shell of masonry was a shallow ditch, the emergency trench of the small garrison massacred after the attack, a ditch still edged by twists of barbed wire. The soil was strewn with hundreds of brass shells, with broken rifles, twisted bayonets, rags and scraps of metal. The mute tale of fierce struggle which had raged as the post passed through the throes of its agony was plain to read. A sickening stench of roasted flesh, of rotting bodies and manure hung in a choking cloud over the emplacement.

A whistle cut through the tumult.

"Five minutes' pause—five minutes' pause—medical attention on the left. Pass the word—pass the word—five minutes' pause—wounded report on the left—"

The Legionnaires were worn out from the day's forced march, the bitter combat up the slope and the final onslaught which had brought them three hundred yards under rifle fire without faltering. They sprawled on the pebbly ground, panted like animals, wiped their sweaty faces with powder stained paws. A few shook their felt covered canteens, hoping for an answering splash.

"Water—water. Where's the water?"

"On the way up with the supplies. Patience, there."

Captain Chabrol looked at his men. He knew what they had been through, yet he must ask them for another effort. They would yield that effort and more, uncomplaining, stoical as they were always. His lean jaws clenched until the bones stood out in knobs on his tanned cheeks. He relaxed into a smile when one of his lieutenants, the youngest, joined him.

"We got here, Captain—" the lieutenant smiled; he could not have been over twenty-two.

"Nice job, Framyr, but only half done. The slobs will have reenforcements here within a few hours, and we must be out by that time. The group is badly needed near Bab-Taza. Here come the supplies. We must get to work as soon as the pause is over——" he indicated with the stem of his pipe the first laden mules led over the ridge by their Kabyle drivers. "That blockhouse must be made fairly strong. I hate to leave one of my sections up here, after what has already occurred—but it must be done."

"Sub-lieutenant Raoult was in command here," Framyr said. "He was my chum at school, you know. He's dead, no doubt."

"No doubt," Chabrol admitted. "Kelburger!"

At the call a massive sergeant rose stiffly to his feet, straddled the prone men nearest him until clear of the groups, doubled forward. He was perhaps thirty-three and, seen closely, proved quite tall; his tanned face showed resolution and long habit of quiet obedience. He halted four paces from the officers, saluted.

"I want you to keep an eye on the bodies found, Kelburger," Chabrol outlined. "Look throughout the place. Work starts at the end of the pause. When you find the sub-lieutenant, have Lieutenant Framyr called. They were friends—"

"Understood, Captain."

"They're still shooting, Framyr," Chabrol said. He lifted the glasses.

"God help the wounded who are not picked up," Lieutenant Framyr said. "Death by thirst if they hide; death by torture if they're found."

"Yes, this campaign is filled with such charming alternatives," Chabrol agreed. "Admirable fighters before us."

He glanced at the watch strapped to his wrist, lifted his whistle. The pause was over . . .

Sergeant Kelburger entered the trench. The place had been held by a section of Senegalese infantry, and the blacks had died to the last man. Their bodies were scattered about, stark nude, despoiled and mutilated, already swelling under the hot sun. Kelburger saw two Legionnaires halted before the corpse of a white man, to which the natives had granted much attention. He first ascertained that it was not that of the officer—Framyr's friend would be a young man—then scolded the privates.

"Cut out the grimaces. He was dead before they got him . . ."

He watched the two youngsters stagger off with their burden. Perfunctorily, he pointed out to one man that a bayonet was a poor substitute for a hammer, then passed through the gateway into the blockhouse itself. The shallow graves of the defenders who had been killed first inflated the soil of the yard. There were gaping holes in the walls, the pockmarks of shrapnel, result

of the bombardment by the French preceding the Legion's attack.

"Where would the officer be?" he wondered. "Ah—in there, I'll bet."

He scrambled over wreckage, entered the room where the signal telegraph apparatus had been. The floor was strewn with papers, there was a pile of cement sacks in a corner. Gun butts had smashed the signal lantern, broken up the table. On the earth floor was the body of the sub-lieutenant, completely nude. The sergeant saw pistol shells scattered about.

"Hope he dropped a few before buying his own ticket," Kelburger muttered. "Wonder how many? The slobs took away their stiffs. Must have been him sent that last message. Good kid—"

BEFORE the mobile group had started, every one within the French lines had been speaking about the heroism of this young fellow. Three times wounded, he had kept command to the last. And the final message had been: "Post done for—regards—France—" Then with the howling Moroccans smashing at the door, he had found time to make a last joke: "Message conclu—" and had doubtless turned to fire his last shots.

"Old Man probably meant for me to ease Framyr's discovery," Kelburger mused, "to cover the body up a bit. Knew I'd understand. But with what?" He glanced at the pile of cement sacks, saw some empty ones stuffed between the full, and pulled them out. A swirl of color came with them—the blockhouse's flag, concealed there. "Nice," Kelburger admitted, and draped the tricolor over the body.

Then he sent for Lieutenant Framyr, who came immediately.

"The sub-lieutenant's in there, Lieutenant. Go in. I'll keep people out until you give the word."

And Sergeant Kelburger stood in the doorway with his back to the room. For a long time, he heard nothing, then Framyr touched his shoulder. The officer's face was greenish; his eyes were blurred. But he spoke firmly enough.

"Have the body taken away. This room must be put in order for the new occupant." He held out the flag. "Where did you find this, Sergeant?"

"Behind the sacks—"

"Gave me time to collect myself—he was my closest friend at school. Do you think he was taken alive?"

Kelburger licked his lips, then lied deliberately.

"No, Lieutenant."

The dead were assembled, laid in a long grave behind the post. When this was filled, work was halted for a few minutes, the assembled companies presented arms, the bugles played a last call for those who had fallen. Captain Chabrol stepped back, covered his head that had been bared for the ritual prayers, and addressed the company.

"This position must be held, for the other blockhouses depend upon it; that is why it was retaken today. The Senegalese infantrymen held on for thirty-four days and left no survivors. They proved admirable soldiers, faithful unto the end. It is now the Legion's turn. I am unwilling to designate any section for the duty. The section commanders and sergeants acting as section commanders will draw lots."

Kelburger stood behind young Framyr. And he was startled to hear the lieutenant's voice.

"Permission to speak, Captain—"

"You have it."

"I make a special request to be left here in command. The officer commanding was my friend, and it seems right to me that as his classmate at St. Cyr the duty of defending the flag he left should be assigned to me."

"Very well, Lieutenant. Request granted. You shall command the section designated by fate—"

Something stirred in Kelburger. Framyr was his chief, had not been long with the regiment, having arrived with the last replacement. But he was a Legion lieutenant, as such entitled to loyal-

ty. He stepped forward in his turn, saluted.

"Permission to speak, Captain—"

"You have it."

"As senior noncommissioned officer of Lieutenant Framyr's section, I make a special request that the section be allowed to remain under his orders in this post of honor. It is our right to stand by our commander."

"Have you consulted the men?"

"No need, Captain—they're Legionnaires."

"Very well," Chabrol accepted simply. "Resume work."

The men worked feverishly; down below the firing was increasing in vigor. Doubtless warned by telephone, for Abd el Krim's headquarters were connected by wire with all advanced units of importance, reserves were pouring toward Bou-Mabrouk as fast as the lean mountaineers could trot from their villages.

The two other sergeants in the section approved what Kelburger had done. Under the circumstances, they had to prove solidary with their chief. One was a splendid type of Russian, Kasdorff; the other a slow witted, heroic German from East Prussia, Gadjusek. But while accepting for himself, Gadjusek communicated a request, with much hesitation.

"Waldemar wants to talk with the Old Man. Shall I give him permission?"

"What does he want?"

"I think he intends to crawl out, Sergeant."

"I'll speak to him. We can't have a single man drop out. It would spoil the show and unnerve the others." Kelburger looked over the swarm of khaki garbed men, seeking Waldemar.

Waldemar was a trouble maker, had once served a jail sentence for striking a sergeant. For reasons of his own, Kelburger condoned this. Franz Waldemar was known to have been an officer in the German army during the Great War. He was very brave, had won several decorations. His chief fault was one rare in Germans, if common enough in Frenchmen and Belgians. He loved to argue with his superiors, to show off before a crowd—in a word, to be different. His year in prison had taught him nothing, and a sojourn in the disciplinary company had left him untamed.

Kelburger found him mending the wire and beckoned him aside. Waldemar surrendered his cutters to another man, obeyed slowly, with irritating deliberation. He was not much over thirty, but his stays in various cells had told heavily. His face was a hard, leathery mask, occasionally lighted by an ironical smile. The stare of his bright, greenish eyes made him seem a little insane. His bearing, the way he carried his head, his arrogance, turned every one against him.

"Want me, Sergeant?" he asked. Waldemar knew Kelburger to be of German origin, but always elected to use French.

"You've been kicking to Gadjusek. Why?"

"I don't want to croak to get you the Honor Cross."

"What do you want?"

"I'm no volunteer, and I'm going to tell the captain I am not. If there are guys who feel like being heroes, count me out. I have some sense."

"The lieutenant can't be let down by anybody while I'm here," Kelburger said, firmly. "Don't let me see you bother him or the captain."

"They didn't draw lots. I didn't volunteer."

"I saved you the trouble."

"The captain will let me off—"

"He won't!"

"He will!"

"The captain won't let you off," Kelburger explained kindly, "because I said I did not need to consult the men. The one coward must make the best of it." The sergeant passed a thumb through his belt. "He won't let you off because I'll keep an eye on you, Waldemar, and if you try any cheap stunt, I swear I'll drop you cold."

"Shoot me?"

"Without doubt." Kelburger smiled. "Those blacks we just buried were bet-

ter men than you. This post was relieved a first time by a column, and they were given a chance to be replaced. When their chief asked to stay, they stuck. I thought of that when I stepped forward. Now, a Legionnaire who ducks out at a time like this shames his comrades and deserves shooting."

"It's not that I am afraid of death."

"Then you have a sensitive nose, maybe?"

Waldemar straightened, held the sergeant's glance.

"I'll stick. But remember you wouldn't listen to me. When you find out that you made a fool of yourself, don't blame me."

"You're forgetting the word 'sergeant'," Kelburger pointed out. "But that won't work. I won't punish you now. But I'm going to be up here, friend—and if they taught you nothing at discipline camp, I will. I'll ride you until you retch your damned insolence—"

"You don't tell me? Listen, calf face, I'll stick only to show you up for a fool. If you tell me I'm afraid of your shooting me, I'll double right toward the Old Man now—"

"I'll admit anything to keep you here."

"Thanks." Waldemar nodded and went back to his work.

Kelburger strolled away without losing sight of the private. Rightly or wrongly, he feared that one man drawing back would spoil the eloquence of his gesture, the value of Framyr's deed. He stopped near Sergeant Kasdorff.

"Watch Waldemar; he's thinking of flunking."

"All right." Kasdorff turned his level, pale blue glance toward his comrade. "He grumbled when you volunteered us, almost loud enough to be heard out front. He is a coward only when he wants to be. Just would like to draw attention before the whole company." The sergeant continued, speaking in the same tone; his eyes did not change expression. "Naturally, if he does, I'll kill him."

Sergeant Gadjusek was doubtful as to the wisdom of keeping Waldemar against his desire.

"Funny for him to consent to act scared over anything. And he's been writing to regimental headquarters about something—for weeks. So—"

"All must stick," Kelburger insisted grimly.

"Why would one going make the rest look bad?" Gadjusek had no craving toward perfection. He added hastily, "Just a remark. Have it your way."

TWO white rockets went up over the French lines. Chabrol must leave. The unloaded mules had already gone down the hill; the repairs that could be made in so short a space had been finished. The quarters in the blockhouse had been cleaned, the water tanks filled, the sheds stuffed with food and ammunition. Weapons turned over to the small garrison by the machine gun section were in position on the bastions.

The Framyr section was lined up, the entire company presented arms as the flag was run up to its old place above the blockhouse. Chabrol inspected the trench hastily, flanked by Kelburger.

"The lieutenant is a young man not yet broken to all the tricks of the trade," Chabrol said. "Guide him a bit, will you? Use tact. Pretty shaken up, eager for revenge. But it would have broken his heart to be turned down publicly—and it was a fine gesture. I count on you, Kelburger. I have known you several years—"

"Six, Captain. You found me in the company when you came. I'll do my best, and whatever happens, we'll stick to the finish—like the others."

Chabrol shook hands with the lieutenant and the noncoms. At the moment of parting, he held Framyr's arm for awhile in silence, seemed about to speak, hesitated and left. Rapidly the company evacuated the crest, and the section left in the blockhouse took shelter. There were forty-six men, for the nor-

mal strength had been reduced in other engagements.

Soon the Legion had joined the rest of the mobile group below; the firing receded southward rapidly. In the office, a small room inside the walls, Framyr was outlining the turns of duty, the routine to be followed, to his sergeants, when the first sight of the enemy was reported. All left the room, walked up the inclined way to the platform of Bastion 2. The French column had already vanished in the maze of ravines. To the north the mountains were melting into the darkening sky on the horizon line.

The first natives appeared on the slopes, marching swiftly. Before long they were within extreme rifle range, and a nervous sentry in the trench discharged his Lebel, without doing any harm. In the nervousness of the first contact, several of the Riffi replied with their Mausers. The second siege of Bou-Mabrouk had started.

Framyr spoke little, appeared gloomy. Yet he directed with considerable spirit the defense against the first rush made by the foe without hope of success, merely to ascertain, by the volume of fire, the number of their opponents. The wave of attackers ebbed, but left behind a scattering of sharpshooters. These men, having been before the blockhouse when it was defended by the Senegalese, knew favorable spots.

Framyr and Kelburger were in the yard of the post, bound for the kitchen shed to inspect the installation, when the young officer halted and lighted a match. The flame had not reached the tip of the cigaret before he was down. He had chanced to select the wrong place.

Kelburger knelt, lifted the limp head, then eased it down gently.

"He's dead," he announced to a private who had come to meet them, the man in charge of the signal telegraph.

"I was just going to ask him something. They've started to talk, at the rear—" he indicated the direction of the French lines—"and I wanted an answer."

"Message," Kelburger dictated, tersely. "Enemy has returned. Contact established. Lieutenant Framyr killed, Sergeant Kelburger in charge. Excellent morale. All going well—and that's all."

THE first night was undisturbed, the first day comparatively calm.

The Legionnaires enjoyed the morning. After facing black soldiers, notoriously poor marksmen at long range, for over a month, the natives were careless. They had deemed themselves reasonably safe at six hundred meters, save when one of the white sergeants or the officer happened to spot them. It took six lives to convince them that they were dealing with another type of enemy.

Waldemar accounted for two of those six. Although he had reason to dislike the fellow, Kelburger was forced to admiration. The private had borrowed a rifle—as No. 1 purveyor in an automatic rifle, he carried a carbine—and amused himself watching for targets. His second victim was an expert shot, and the issue of their long range duel was in doubt for two hours. Twice dirt, spurted upward by a bullet, flecked the Legionnaire's face, and once he missed. His second shot struck the arm left exposed by the native, and as he involuntarily straightened and showed his head. Waldemar placed his third bullet through it.

"How do you like that, Sergeant?" he turned and asked of Kelburger, crouched near him.

"Pretty good."

"If we had exchanged rifles, I'd have hit him the first shot. He had a Mauser—much better than this clarinet I'm using—French junk."

"Nobody asked you to come here and use it."

"That's so. Say, I thought you were going to ride me—"

"Give me a motive and watch."

"Don't see what you could do. Lock

me up? I'd be safer behind walls." Waldemar smiled. "Nothing you can do."

"I can take you inside a shed and thrash you," Kelburger stated calmly.

"And risk getting enough punishment to affect your ability to command here. Anyway, there won't be any need of that. I'm going to tell you something, Sergeant—day after tomorrow." As he spoke, Waldemar reached out and pulled Kelburger by the sleeve. "Your head shows a bit, and some one may be watching."

"I don't know what to make of you, Waldemar."

"I wonder about myself, at times." The Legionnaire looked up and down the trench, saw that the nearest man was beyond hearing distance. "Personally, I like you, Kelburger. You're stupid in some ways, but you're honest. What are we doing here?"

"Fate, I guess," Kelburger replied. He did not resent Waldemar's words, spoken privately and evidently not meant to offend him.

"I don't mean this place; I mean in the Legion. Out of three sergeants, there are two Germans, you and Gadjusek. And thirty of the men are Germans. Good fellows. I can't imagine you, for example, deserting. You came here in 1913, didn't you?"

"I struck a sergeant and escaped," Kelburger explained. "You should understand that. You've done it once and have felt like doing it fifty times."

"That's why you understand men so well."

"Perhaps."

"You've made it clear you had some reason. But myself? And the others? All of us, save young Breisch, served in the War. And here we are in French uniforms. I wonder why we came here, instead of elsewhere."

"Three reasons, in order of importance: hunger, escape, a woman."

"And the desire for adventure—"

"Contributing factor, not a cause," Kelburger defined.

"There's a woman waiting for me," Waldemar said. He was about to speak again, but peered over the parapet, adjusting his sights. Then he sighed regretfully. "Too far—waste of ammunition— Well, here comes my relief. So long, comrade."

Several times that day, other men asked Kelburger similar questions. Having a rather definite belief that they were doomed to die within a few days, they wondered how it all had happened.

There were less pleasant manifestations. Occasionally he heard murmurs he was meant to hear. They were accusing Framyr of making a foolish display, accusing him, Kelburger, of bidding for the Legion of Honor Cross. But he knew that they believed the last no more than he did himself, that at the moment he had stepped forward and offered his life and theirs, they had been with him heart and soul. They were Legionnaires, and their sole pride took root in their willingness to sacrifice what others clung to so dearly: life.

He ignored the whispers. As soon as they were occupied by an attack, these fellows would not trouble themselves with past or future, but concentrate on selling their hides at the highest price possible. This grumbling was an outlet, helped dispel the dreary monotony, a monotony made painful by the knowledge that their existence was drawing toward a close.

At nightfall he dispatched a message.

"No casualty. Excellent morale. All well."

He had dinner with Kasdorff. Fortunately, the cook was capable and knew how to disguise canned beef. A cup of hot coffee and a vague pudding, tasting at once of many flavors, ended the meal. He filled a pipe.

"Gadjusek is on duty," he informed Kasdorff. "I'll take a nap. You go on from eight until twelve, then you wake me up. Framyr's death puts us in a hell of a mess, but it can't be helped. I'll share with the two of you, and just take the extra that comes along. Luckily,

there isn't much paper work up here. Distribute additional hand and rifle grenades. We should have some sort of a fuss tonight."

He slept for a few hours. Several times he propped himself on one elbow, listened. A grenade had crashed, or the machine gun on the platform above him fired a magazine, the detonations vibrating to him through the layers of dirt and cement.

Kasdorff turned when he slid into the trench.

"Bad news," he said.

"No joke?"

"Gadjusek's dead. He was about to throw a grenade. You know how clumsy he is—was. Well, we picked him up and I had him buried. Otherwise, nothing new. They've been yelling a bit out there, that's all. I'm turning in. Good night."

"I'll have to appoint a corporal to fill in," Kelburger thought as he inspected the trench.

The night was beautiful, and the stars seemed to be brighter than he ever recalled seeing them. The warmth of the air was more that of Spring than of Moroccan Summer. He spoke to a few of the Legionnaires as he passed, completed his tour, and came to a stop beside Breisch. He thought he saw the young fellow's teeth showing.

"Having a good time, lad?" he asked in German.

"They've been talking to us, sir."

"Ah, what did they say?"

"I don't know. In Arabic they were talking." Breisch chuckled. "Also, they throw stones into the wire, to get us to shoot. But they don't fool me. I can tell when a stone falls or when it rolls under a man's feet, sir."

"How old are you?" Kelburger asked suddenly, struck for the first time by the fellow's boyish speech.

"Don't give me away, sir. I'm sixteen, almost seventeen. But I enlisted as nineteen. This is all interesting, sir, just like the stories they tell. But at first, it was pretty hard, and very dull. I didn't like the Legion then."

"Wouldn't want to go home?"

"No, sir." Breisch touched the sergeant's arm. "There they go again. Listen!"

A voice rose, vociferating insults.

"Sons of impure women—swine—dogs—you shall all be killed. We'll rip the scalp from your skulls. We'll unwind your bowels—O pigs! O pigs!"

"*Eskout, hallouf,*" a Legionnaire answered with fluent virulence. "*Lououat, ben kelb, ben qah'ba—khera menek oum—kif khera—*"

"*Khruya!*" the Moroccan retorted. "My brother!"

Men laughed in the darkness. Then Kelburger heard the rasping of a rifle breech sliding open and shut. He ran toward the sound.

"What are you doing?"

"Try a V.B. on them, Sergeant." The Legionnaire had slipped the Vivian-Bessières rifle grenade into the muzzle of his rifle.

"I suppose that'll make them sore. Young Breisch has more sense than you have; he knows when they're fooling."

He had raised his voice, and a bullet whined overhead. The rifle cracked, and the lead smacked against the surrounding wall over the trench. An automatic rifle stammered angrily for two seconds, aimed at the flash. Derisive howling greeted the attempt.

BEYOND the barbed wire the night was filled with noises, real and imaginary. Men were undoubtedly prowling. They listened for voices, hoped for the flare of a match. Tonight this was bearable, as the siege was beginning, but Kelburger knew what it would mean after a week, two weeks, three weeks. And always one might expect just such rustlings to spill a shouting swarm out of the darkness.

The minutes dragged, puctuated by an occasional burst from a machine gun on the bastions.

The wind grew cooler, blowing from

the sea, just beyond the mountains. On the mountains of the Riff, rallying fires were ablaze. The hammering of firing drifted at long intervals from distant blockhouses, while flares lighted a section of the sky. Men were awake, on watch, all along the fighting front.

Kelburger looked at his watch. Two o'clock. Two hours longer to remain in the trench, shifting from one foot to the other, exchanging whispered words with the men.

"Comrades—comrades!"

It was a new voice, speaking in German.

"I forbid an answer," Kelburger cried.

"Who is that yelling?" the other asked, in the same tongue he had first used. "That's old Kelburger, I'll bet! How are you, Kelburger—know me?"

Kelburger clenched his fists. He did not know who the speaker was. But certainly, he was a deserter from the Legion. There were many such with the Riffi. And despite official scorn, there was a real danger in their propaganda. With a French officer present, the danger would have been small. But would the prestige of a sergeant of German origin hold out long? It would become harder to die when a chance for life was offered.

"Don't answer. Forbidden," he repeated.

"What oufit is that? You won't tell me? You're a section from the Third of the Second, Chabrol's company. Your lieutenant was killed yesterday. What are you sticking there for? How much are you getting for it? What will you ever get for it. If you come out here, you can fight with us if you want to. If not, you'll be sent home on boats. Home, boys—the papa, the mama, the sweetheart you love—think of it! If you fight on, you'll all be killed. You saw the Senegalese—your bellies will be torn open and filled with stones, your eyes put out with coals. It's dark and Kelburger can't see you. Come on, come on. Eh, Wachtel, are you there?"

Wachtel was two yards from Kelburger. The sergeant heard him gasp, heard the butt of his rifle strike the ground. The deserter then called out a list of names, several those of men present in the trench.

"Know him?" Kelburger asked.

"That's Megendank, who was broken from sergeant for drunkenness and hopped it from Camp Des Roches two months back. They told us his body had been found by the native scouts, without a head. And there he is—"

"Can't you hear that's a rehearsed speech? He's got to do this or they'll kill him. He'll talk about women, next. They all have to."

"I've got a fine job fixing their telephone lines," Megendank resumed. "I get good food, eggs, chickens, beef—all the good stuff I want to drink, wine, beer, alcohol— I have three girls all my own, three little cuties, and do they love me? Well, I'm fighting for their country! If you have a trade, you can earn good money. I get five pesetas and my keep every day of the month. There are fellows who get ten. And nobody can order me to shut up, you notice."

"Sounds good," Wachtel grumbled.

"Always does," Kelburger said. "That's what it's for. Nevertheless, if you're risking your hide this side, he's out there, risking it a bit more. This isn't fixing telephone lines. And what about those boats to take you home? Spanish and French gunboats patrol the coast. Spain surrenders Legion deserters now, and the nearest neutral land is Italy. When they get hold of you in the Riff you stay there."

"But that's likely true about the women," Wachtel argued. "Those people don't look at having three or four the way we do. All you can feed; that's the rule."

"Why isn't he home with his, if he has so many?" Kelburger protested weakly.

"A man must attend to business, too."

"Nice business. How would you like his job?"

"As much as this, since you ask me, Sergeant."

"I'll show you—"

Kelburger crawled over the parapet, slid under the wires. He lay in wait, carbine ready. When Megendank next spoke, he emptied his magazine toward the spot. Then, knowing what to expect, he tumbled back into the trench. A heavy object dropped near the spot from which he had fired, then there was a feeble explosion. One of the crude bombs manufactured in the Riff had sputtered in vain. Few of them were much use. Unless one were very close when they went off, there was no risk. The pathetic side of this hostile demonstration brought a certain measure of good humor.

"Oh, Megendank! How much do they pay the guy who makes those?"

"No kidding, you left some of the sardines in that one!"

"If that's a sample of your home products, keep your women, eh, fool!"

Kelburger did not interfere. So long as the conversation was in this mood, he might well disregard instructions and allow "an exchange of views with the enemy." Megendank shouted insults at him, invited him to single combat between the lines, for the pleasure of hearing his own voice. Then he grew tired and left. Many of the hill people must have retired with the deserter, for the shift at four o'clock was not greeted by the expected sniping, despite considerable noise.

"I'll relieve you at 8:15," Kelburger told Kasdorff. "If Megendank comes back, don't let the men talk to him. And if they talk aloud, seemingly among themselves, listen carefully. You know German?"

"I should after seven years of Legion."

"Then keep an ear open to what the men talk about anyway. This is a rotten business. And, between ourselves, this Megendank is not a fool. He's probably the one who organized the attack that cleaned out the Senegalese. That was a good job, almost a Legion job. You saw what was left!"

"All right," Kasdorff agreed.

"You don't seem much perturbed about it."

"Whether I am or not, what matters?" the Russian asked.

Waldemar spoke to Kelburger when the sergeant passed him on his way to the gate.

"I hear Megendank's around with a good proposition."

"Well, what's that to you?"

"I'll tell you in a couple of days."

"Be sure I'll like to hear about it. Good night—"

"Good night, comrade."

THERE was no serious attack the following day.

The garrison at Bou-Mabrouk understood why when they heard the sound of firing miles away, the steady pounding of batteries. The mobile group, too small to push back the enemy on the entire front, yet able to penetrate his lines almost at will, was making a strong demonstration to ease the pressure on the blockhouses.

Naturally, and although there was no possible communication save through the signal telegraph with the outside world, the usual rumors started. The troops from France had at last come, the combat was the beginning of a big drive which would push Abd el Krim upon the Spaniards and consequently free them, the men at Bou-Mabrouk. Kelburger did not interfere with this talk. Hope, no matter how groundless, was a good remedy for the wastage of courage through despair.

The snipers on the slopes were busy. Kelburger raged; he had no lives to spare, yet each new discovery of an open angle had to be paid for with a life. An open space the width of one's palm was sufficient. The Moroccan marksmen were prone on the soil, their excellent Mausers solidly braced on stones, and had nothing to do save press the trigger when the spot they

covered was obscured by a man passing near.

This leakage of human lives—seven men in a few hours—had a deplorable effect on the morale of the privates. They wondered aloud what sort of fool had constructed the blockhouse, which was as open as a sieve. Kelburger had the passage between the trench and the gateway covered with sand bags.

But if there was despair, there were thrills.

Shortly after noon, a low hum in the southern sky swelled to a vibrating drone. A plane appeared, flying high, above good rifle range. Far from the blockhouse the machine started a long glide, which brought it two hundred feet above the fluttering flag, in the hail of bullets fired by hundreds of native warriors. An object dropped, hurtled blackly, and struck the earth inside the enclosure.

The Legionnaires in the trenches waved their peaked caps, shouted thanks, and for a split second, all saw the round knob of the observer's helmeted head peering over the edge of the cockpit, all saw his gloved hand wave in cordial answer.

While all expected the aviators to seek safety immediately, the plane continued its glide, skimmed down the slope, machine gun hammering. The besiegers rose and took flight, with cries of terror and rage, while the riflemen in the trench manned the loopholes and dropped them at will. But even in their excitement the Legionnaires feared for their friends.

"Go back! Go back!"

The machine swooped high, the pilot executed a mad dance in mid-air, glided over the blockhouse once more. And again, all saw the hand waving, as the plane made for the French lines.

"Look, there's holes in his wings."

"Well done, friends, well done."

Kelburger opened the package in the office. There were medical supplies in tin cases and protected phials, and mail. There were several letters for Framyr; probably the news of the lieutenant's death had not reached Fez as yet. He had opened an envelop addressed to him when a Legionnaire entered.

"Sergeant, Sergeant—Sergeant—"

"I heard you. What's wrong with you?"

"Sergeant Kasdorff has been hit—"

"All right—*you're* not hit." Kelburger rose, selected two letters from the pile before him; he made an effort, kept his voice steady. "Where? When? Seriously?"

"No one knows how. First thing you know he was there with his face all smashed up. Looks bad, Sergeant."

"Where is he?"

"Corporal Gorcel had him taken to the ambulance."

Kelburger ran across the yard, entered the building where the wounded were kept. Kasdorff had been deposited on a thin straw mattress, and a first aid man was trying to stop the blood. Kelburger knelt to grasp the Russian's hand, saw that life was already fleeing from the eyes. Kasdorff could not talk; the bullet had torn through his neck, smashed his jaw and penetrated into the palate, mangling the tongue.

"Letters for you, old man," Kelburger said. "Shall I read them?"

Kasdorff blinked his eyes. But Kelburger found the first letter to be in Russian, which he could not read.

"Find a man who can read Russian and bring him at once!" Kelburger then ripped the second envelop.

> "Your account is not settled. You still owe nine hundred and thirty-nine francs fifty centimes for your summer uniforms with special braids and buttons, also for shirts. Unless this amount is paid for by the fifteenth of next month, your corps commander shall be informed—"

Kelburger shook his head and said—

"Tailor's bill."

Kasdorff's eyes livened into a gleam of amusement. The wounded jaws moved weakly, perhaps in a laugh. Then the light wavered within the pupils and the eyes died.

"I read Russian, Sergeant," said a big Legionnaire, from the doorway.

"Get out of here, you ass!"

The man looked down at Kasdorff, crossed himself, and walked out. Kelburger's cheeks were moist. He had known the dead man five years; they had lent each other money, helped each other. Then he spread a clean handkerchief handed him by the first aid man over his friend's face.

Kelburger pulled himself together with an effort. His personal loss did not matter. Kasdorff as an individual was unimportant; it was the loss of the noncommissioned officer that counted. Kelburger could not postpone appointing chiefs, as his turn might come any moment. Unfortunately, he could not think of any corporal present who could be depended upon to group the needed qualities.

Gorcel was a fairly good man, but had no grip on his men. Caviers was intelligent but yielded to excitement easily. The privates offered better material, oddly enough—several seemed not only well educated but of strong character. He entered the office to consult the records, hoping to find guidance in them, and saw Waldemar seated on a stool, smoking a cigaret.

He was opening his lips to announce his promotion, the usual routine cast aside through necessity and the corporal's pride not considered, when Waldemar spoke—

"Here's the big news. I'm no longer a Legionnaire—"

"Are you crazy?"

"No. I have figured it up again. My five years' enlistment ended yesterday. So, today, I am a free man, a civilian. That's what I meant to tell the captain. You wouldn't let me. How do you like it—now?"

"How did the recorders allow you to stay in Morocco on active service, if you were near discharge?"

"That's what I have been asking them in letters for a month. Guess they got mixed up owing to the extra work brought on them by this campaign. And there was my punishment to confuse things further. One year was prison camp and did not count toward elapsed service—eight months were cell punishment in the company." Waldemar offered his booklet, opened at the correct page. "Look at the dates on my record. It's plain I ended my five years yesterday at noon, allowing for jail and everything else."

"All right, what do you wish?"

"My discharge."

"Up here? Where will you go to?"

"Outside."

"To join Megendank?"

"None of your business. Legally, you can not hold me—unless there exists a state of war between my country of birth and France, which isn't the case."

"So you intend to go to the Riff?"

"That is none of your business. You can telegraph if you like, but here's a letter from regimental headquarters, stating that my figures are correct and that my discharge will come through regular channels."

"I'll wait for instructions."

"Better telegraph then. Don't hold me here until they come up and wipe us out. I am once more a private citizen, a German entitled to my national rights. My consul would back me up. In the eyes of the law, at home, you know that a German is always a German. You know I've served the five years I signed for. That's all France can ask of me. Not a minute more do I owe."

"What do you expect me to do?"

"Run up a white flag, inform our—your—enemy that you have a noncombatant, a neutral, within the blockhouse, and I'll ask for a safe-conduct through their lines to Ajdir or some other port where I can ship for home."

"The Riffs care as much for international law as a cat does for a ripe, red apple, Waldemar—"

"I'll chance it."

"You'll join them?"

"That, for the third time, is none of your business."

"I can't let you go."

"Listen—my five years are over. I served them, well enough. I have medals to prove it. My sins I paid for in prison. I am square. I have a wife and two children at home, no longer any reason to remain here. My name is not Waldemar—"

"No, Waldemar is your first name, I know that." Kelburger shrugged. "I can even tell you that your father was a colonel on the staff of the Sixth Army Corps in 1912. You look like him. One doesn't have to be a sorcerer to know that you were mixed up in a counter-revolution in Germany soon after the Armistice—"

"You have not told any one?"

"You're a Legionnaire. So am I. Your name is the one you gave here—for me and all others—"

Waldemar rose, offered his hand, his attitude changed.

"You are a gentleman, Kelburger—"

"I thank your Excellency—" The sergeant grinned.

"May I appeal to your discretion further, friend?"

"Naturally. Orderly—" Kelburger summoned the Legionnaire who ran errands between him and various emplacements— "take this note to the telegraphist." He wrote rapidly, reading aloud, " 'Commander at Bou-Mabrouk inquires exact status Second Class Legionnaire Waldemar, Franz, Matricular Number 11091, enlisted at Strassbourg in March 1919.' Tell him to put that through as soon as he raises the lines."

"You understand why I want to live, why I want to get home, Kelburger?"

"Yes. I'll—"

He broke off and ran from the room.

A SENTRY had shouted, and grenades were already bursting, while the familiar clamor of attacking natives rose piercingly, startingly near. He reached the wall, slid down to the trench. Hell seemed to have broken loose in the narrow ditch. The hand grenades of the Riffi crunched everywhere, the wall was battered by a multitude of bullets. The machine guns on the bastions were firing in a steady ripping. The Legionnaires had emptied their magazines, were flinging grenades at the horde curling before the obstacle formed by the barbed wire.

Half naked, desperate, the mountaineers were throwing themselves forward, scrambling through the first strands, struggling forward. Their scythes swung in flashing curves, hacking at the metal. Leading them were several black cloaked, green turbaned regulars, one of them a very tall, very straight old fellow, with a white beard drooping down to his chest.

"Al—lah! Al—lah—ah—"

Kelburger knelt on the parapet, lifted his automatic pistol. His eye ran down the barrel straight toward the gaping mouth of the elderly regular, who was the soul of the attack. Time after time, he pressed the trigger, felt the answering jerk as the explosions of his weapon added to the uproar, but the man would not drop.

"Get the old guy! Demolish the old guy!" he screamed.

An automatic rifleman heard him, and the impacts of bullets caused the wires to squeal, vibrate, snap; bright lead blotches suddenly spread on the metal uprights, chips flew from the wooden stakes. At last a well aimed burst reached the target; the old man was beheaded and the thin body relaxed on the wires. The majority of the attackers hesitated.

But while their chief was battered and torn by the automatic, a few of his followers had passed him, had plunged through the wire and were making for the trench, cut, bleeding, fighting mad. There was a form of panic among the Legionnaires, a flight forward. They could not bear to wait for the shock, could not think of using their firearms; they longed to meet steel with steel. Eight or nine climbed up, darted their long rifles tipped with the quadrangular

blades twenty-two inches long.

Young Breisch closed in with a big, hairy devil, who tore the rifle from his grasp. The young German grasped the wrist lifted above him, twisted the knife aside, as they fell wrestling to the ground. His free hand groped, the fingers closed eagerly on a sizable stone and, in a few blows, he battered in his opponent's skull.

The handful of Moroccans that had come through was wiped out in a few seconds. Kelburger urged the Legionnaires who had left the trench back to shelter, with words and well applied kicks. It would be most unsafe in the open within a few seconds. He literally had to tear Breisch off his victim, to throw him over the edge. Then he kicked the rifle after him.

"V. B.—J. D," he ordered.

These initials unleashed the Vivian-Bessières rifle grenade and brought the Jouhandeaux-Delandes mortar into action. This last was a squat weapon developed for trench warfare, firing a seventy-five millimeter shell. Well handled, it is a formidable asset—and the Legionnaires hurled explosion after explosion on the fleeing natives.

"Gorcel—where's Corporal Gorcel?" Kelburger asked.

"Here," said some one. "He's dead."

Kelburger paled. A vague superstition was taking shape. Bou-Mabrouk had taken in turn Framyr, Gadjusek, Kasdorff; and no sooner had he thought of Gorcel than the poor chap had died. He swept the groups with his eyes, hesitating to designate the next. He selected a corporal at random, the first he saw.

"You're second in command."

The other grinned, flushed with pleasure.

"Thank you, Sergeant."

LEAVING the trench at eight o'clock, Kelburger went to the office, lighted the lantern after masking the window with a blanket. He wrote a brief description of the day's events in the log. Consulting figures given him by the group chiefs, he found that the section had not lost only its sole officer, two of three sergeants, but that the garrison had been cut down to twenty-seven men.

He not only understood at present why the Senegalese had been wiped out, but was astonished that they had lasted thirty-four days. He scanned the reports given him by the Legionnaire in charge of supplies, and saw that there was no cause for worry from that direction. There were enough sacks of rice, dried peas and beans to keep them alive two months.

Megendank offered an unexpected problem. Nineteen out of the twenty-seven survivors were Germans. The very fact that they had come into the Foreign Legion designated them as adventurers, men willing to accept change, to risk a long chance. Not one scorned Megendank at heart. All recalled that he had been a fine fellow and a very brave man while serving in the Legion, much like themselves.

Kelburger was worried about his corporals, Hohl, whom he had appointed second in command, was a sturdy fellow, ambitious, but unintelligent and somewhat childish in speech. Kelburger knew him to be a mark for the cleverer privates, who imitated his pompous speech, repeated with exaggeration his vows of honesty to the Legion.

One thing was certain: If Kelburger were killed, Hohl would not surrender. But the blockhouse would not hold out three days. Seeing the opportunity to distinguish himself, to prove that he had been an unrecognized Napoleon, he would try out the many absurd theories he voiced freely, and fritter away men's lives. From the meager information contained in the privates' records, the sergeant gleaned several names; those of men he would see and converse with, in the hope of finding the man for the job.

Chabrol's swift assent to Lieutenant Framyr's request appeared foolish in the light of events. But the captain could

not know that fate would drop the leaders first. Kelburger thought of wearing a private's tunic to escape snipers, who would seek out the ranking survivor persistently. But that would have a bad effect—a Legionnaire could not hide his rank because of danger. Neither could he remain in the office to direct the defense; no one did that in the Legion.

At nine the telegrapher entered, bringing the answer to Kelburger's report of the attack. He was warmly complimented, assured that his requests for decorations would be given full consideration. Another message concerned Waldemar.

> Meknes Regimental Headquarters informs Waldemar, Franz, Matricular Number 11091, has concluded five years service—is entitled to full discharge under usual conditions. Considering special situation, Commander Bou-Mabrouk Blockhouse is authorized to keep him *en subsistance* for food and lodgings until further notice.

"Send Waldemar here and go back to work."

The ex-Legionnaire arrived two minutes later. He was in uniform, as Bou-Mabrouk offered no chance to purchase civilian garments. But he wore slippers, smoked a cigaret, and appeared in excellent humor after reading the telegram.

"See? An error in the records," he declared.

"I didn't see you in the trench or on the bastion during the attack this afternoon."

"I am no longer a soldier," Waldemar smiled gently. "As a matter of fact, I expose myself to immediate execution if found arms in hand, in uniform, and not a soldier. Moreover, you'll admit it was devilishly dangerous in those places—for a civilian."

"Think you'd have escaped if they had taken this place?"

"I knew they couldn't—not yet."

"What do you intend to do? Remain here, a spectator?"

"No. I'll leave."

"It's impossible for you to leave, Waldemar. We can not send you to the place you enlisted; *force majeure** can be invoked."

"There are other courses open," Waldemar protested. "I can elect to be discharged in North Africa, provided I can prove immediate employment, or I can ask to be taken to the nearest border."

"In this case, I suppose, the frontier of the Spanish Riff," Kelburger grinned. "We can't assure you safety. Also, you are entitled to one civilian suit and a cap or hat. You must wait for them."

"I waive that."

"Generous!"

"The *de facto* frontier nearest us is the enemy's lines. Simply turn me loose."

"I will not," Kelburger said.

"You can not stop me. I am a civilian and a neutral."

"And I am the commanding officer of a besieged town, of which you are at once the civilian population and the neutral colony. There is no law in the world above my duty as a commander—which orders me to subordinate the welfare of the civilian population and neutral colony, to the complete execution of my orders. You have been here since the start of the siege, possess valuable information; therefore, it is my strict duty to hold you here."

"I'll give you my word not to reveal anything."

"I refuse to accept your word." Kelburger held up his hand, smiled to take the sting from the refusal. "My genuine reason of course is that your departure, bound for life, would demoralize the rest, bound for death. We started together; we'll finish together."

"Because some fool clerk made a mistake, I shall lose the chance to see my wife, my children, after years of waiting and when I was growing to hope?"

"No fool but yourself made you enlist, Waldemar. Your belated family worries weigh nothing in my mind against the safety of Bou-Mabrouk, the morale

* Corresponding to the English phrase: the Act of God.

of its garrison. Nothing—" Kelburger nodded slowly—"nothing."

"It's your fault. I wanted to speak to the captain. That stupid lieutenant's pride, what does it amount to now? You must let me go. You must!" Waldemar grasped Kelburger by the shoulder. "I can't die now. If those devils get in here, I'll have no time to explain. They'll kill me. Things have changed back home. I can go back—home—home—"

Kelburger shook himself free.

"To those outside you're a Legionnaire like them, and going away to live is somehow like laughing in their dead men's faces! Being the man you are, the man you were, you can't ask for life. If one man goes over to Megendank, all will want to go."

"You have little stomach for what's coming to you," Waldemar said, "and it's yourself you think of when you don't want to see a man go away to live."

Kelburger stood, threw his *képi* to the floor. His face was convulsed with emotion, his teeth bared in a snarl.

"Yes, I am afraid—like every one else. Fear melts my bones every hour of the day, every minute of the night. God in heaven—we are all afraid—all—afraid until we hold our aching bellies. But we'll stick, we'll stick! And no man is going to leave us, no one—not you. We came here together; we'll all finish together!"

"You'd want to follow me, yourself?"

Kelburger struck out, Waldemar reeled.

"You tell the truth. I'd want to follow you. That's why I'd rather kill you—with my hands—"

"You're weeping," Waldemar whispered.

"It's sweat," Kelburger insisted, wiping his moist face. "But, you see, if I feel like that—I, a commander—what would the others feel like? You are not going until this outpost is relieved. I'll give orders that if you communicate with Megendank you must be shot."

"Poor fellow," Waldemar said, and left.

A WEEK passed, and the strain grew. In many ways the Legionnaires suffered more than had their predecessors. The white men with the Senegalese had been upheld by their responsibility as representatives of a superior race, by the pride of fighting for their country. The blacks were unimaginative men who suffered only physically, from thirst, hunger and wounds.

The Legionnaires were tortured morally by Megendank, who came each night to taunt them, to flatter them. He described their horrible suffering after capture, their bliss and comfort if they came to him. Meanwhile the natives were not idle, and proceeded methodically with the siege.

Each charge left bodies hanging on the wires, bodies that could not be removed, that the Moroccans could not be permitted to bear away under a flag of truce. The water spoiled, smelled, and even the *anisette* could not quite kill the taste of putrefaction.

Then the cook opened meat tins without care, and all suffered from dysentery and nausea. Most of the danger spots had been screened or were avoided, but casualties still occurred. The ambulance room had a bad reputation. Men died swiftly within its walls. So the wounded refused to go there for treatment, disinfected their own wounds with permanganate of potash and iodine. When a man died it was difficult to find a free space in the enclosure to bury him; the spade uncovered other bodies.

Two or three times each night the men off duty were awakened, forced to run into the trench, to exchange an unreal nightmare for a worse reality.

One man was an exception: Willy Breisch.

Many times Kelburger envied his strength, not the physical strength which was puny contrasted to his mature muscles, but the strength of his soul. Breisch was openly enjoying the siege. He annoyed his comrades by his excessive zeal, his voiced enthusiasm.

He was a rare specimen of the born soldier.

When there was a gap in the wire to be mended, a noise to be investigated, Breisch volunteered and dived into the darkness. Before enlisting, he had read a prodigious pile of books on the Legion, on Africa, on the World War, knew things that most of his mates had either forgotten or never known. After discovering that Kelburger listened sympathetically, he offered suggestions.

"An automatic rifle here—" he would indicate on a plan of the position he had drawn—"would choke that dead angle in the sweep of Machine Gun 2; they know that place and keep crawling into it to cut the wires."

With endless energy he prepared traps for prowlers, filed the pins of hand grenades to be tripped by a thin wire, contrived alarm bells with tin cans and empty cartridges. Kelburger heard men repeatedly wishing aloud that some one would kill the youngster and give them peace. His optimism, his good humor, was an insult to the general gloom.

He was so sure of surviving that he spent much of his time off duty studying French, learning grammatical rules, for he was ambitious. When he dropped the book it was to pick up a mouth organ, which he played with much skill, and lose himself in sentimental selections.

Kelburger cited the youngster in his dispatches several times. And on the twelfth day of the siege, news came that the Military Medal had been awarded Willy Breisch, an award carrying with it the right to wear the Colonial Cross and the Colonial Medal.

The sergeant called Breisch into the office, read him the message. And he was cheered by the fellow's obvious elation, appreciated perhaps the last really happy smile he would see.

"You've deserved it," he cut short the private's thanks. "But don't let success go to your head. I mean don't get yourself killed uselessly."

"You don't think we'll all be killed here, as the men are saying we will be, sir?"

"Not in the least," Kelburger lied earnestly. "You'll live to be sergeant, if you save yourself for promotion. And I need you."

"Really, sir?"

"You're the type that a sergeant likes. You're ten years younger now than when I got the Medal. Keep on being loyal, doing your duty and sticking with your chiefs."

Breisch was standing across the table from the sergeant. He was tall, wide, but still gawky with that queer awkwardness of the limbs that departs with the teens. Kelburger looked at him, did not know whether to envy or pity him. Pity him for dying so young, envy him for dying young. Then he noticed that the freckled face was blushing, that, for the first time, Breisch was avoiding his glance.

"What's on your mind? Why do you act like that?"

"What you said about being loyal. I don't know if I should carry tales—"

"I'll judge that. Speak—"

"I don't know whether I ought to speak."

"Listen, lad—" Kelburger circled the table to face the Legionnaire—"make up your mind, once and forever, to finish saying anything you start. That way, you'll learn to keep your mouth shut. If what you know is something private, not of my business, I'll keep a secret as well as you. If it concerns duty, you must speak. True, a Legionnaire does not squeal on a Legionnaire, save for the Legion."

"There's been things going on, sir."

"What things?"

"First, you know the night Megendank first came? You said that no one should answer. And when you left, you told Sergeant Kasdorff to keep any one from answering. Well, Megendank came again, at dawn. And a man started to talk, asking him questions. Kasdorff took him aside, and the fellow begged him not to tell you. Kasdorff promised,

but during the fuss over the plane, he saw him toss a note out, wrapped around a stone. And you know what happened. The man was afraid—"

"Who murdered the sergeant?"

"I won't give names. But he's dead."

"Sure he's dead?"

"Yes, Sergeant."

"I'll tell you the name—Wachtel. Right, eh? And now when I am sleeping, does any one answer Megendank?"

"Yes, Sergeant. But it's all right, just to tell him that we won't quit you. He told us that if we walked out now we would be paid money. He says this place is needed—"

Kelburger nodded. If the Riffi could obtain control of the blockhouse, keep the flag flying and answer signals, their bands might be far toward Taza before the mobile group was warned.

"There's been no agreement yet?"

"No, sir."

"What does Corporal Hohl say to these conversations?"

"He doesn't take them seriously. He lets the men talk all they wish to, but if he catches one trying to crawl away during the night, he licks him good and plenty. He says he'll stand for talk, but not for desertion."

"Who does most of the talking on our side?"

"I can't tell you that."

"'No?" Kelburger glared at the young soldier. "I'll tell you—Waldemar."

"Oh, no—" Breisch laughed—"Waldemar, when he comes, talks only of himself. He even offers money to be taken away. Megendank's agreeable, but Hohl and the other corporals won't let him because you gave orders."

"You can sew the stripes of corporal on your sleeves, Breisch. That'll look better with the medals. Keep quiet about this talk, and I won't mention where I got information."

A few minutes later Kelburger inspected the trench. He appointed a corporal to take Hohl's place and took him back with him to the office. He gave word to the bastion guard to call him only in case of grave danger, and shut the door.

"You think I'm a heavy sleeper, Hohl?"

"Why do you say that?"

"Waldemar and some of the others have been gabbing with that son of a dog, Megendank. I believe I gave you instructions."

"You did, Sergeant. But you know how impossible it is to keep men from talking."

"Are you a corporal or not?" asked Kelburger.

Hohl shrugged.

"Talk doesn't hurt—passes the time away."

"While if you don't interfere you don't risk what Wachtel did to Sergeant Kasdorff. Is that it?"

"I heard Kasdorff had not talked—"

"So you knew?"

"Everybody knew in the trench, except yourself. What good would it have done to inform you? Wachtel got himself killed since, fighting like a brave man. Don't blame me too much, Sergeant."

"I suppose you want me to give you compliments."

"If Lieutenant Framyr were still alive and you were not responsible for everything, would you report all you heard in the trench. Would you have turned in Wachtel? You know how those things go." Hohl was manifestly innocent of any evil intent. "I let them talk, but not one man managed to desert—while if I had kept them quiet, they'd have sneaked—"

Kelburger laid an automatic pistol on the table.

"I want to know who is the leader in this scheme to surrender the blockhouse."

"You can shoot me. I don't give any names, Sergeant. That's not done in the Legion."

"This place will hold out to the last man, Hohl—"

"It will, if I am the last man, Sergeant," the corporal answered simply.

SIX days had passed. There were nineteen men left.

Kelburger spent most of his time in the trench, seldom slept in his quarters. But the men no longer feared him, gripped by a stronger dread.

Whether Hohl had spoken of his conversation with Kelburger or not, all seemed to know that the sergeant knew of their conferences with Megendank, were aware that he had been unable to find a fit punishment. Scoldings, threats or prison were laughable to those men who were condemned to death. From that time on they dropped all pretense, answered Megendank whenever he hailed them during the night.

There was a strange pleasure in these talks, Kelburger acknowledged. Megendank was from the outside, belonged in the world of the living, formed a last tie with life. And he had become a sort of oral gazette—to be credited in the same measure that newspapers are believed, with due consideration for his known interests.

"What news today?"

"The mobile group hooked up with a bunch of Tsouli. Quite a fuss, for an hour. You lost two officers, one of them the little martinet who used to be with the Third Company. We made a couple of prisoners. There was a Britisher with our fellows, and Abd el Krim did not want him to see too much rough stuff, on account of the press. One of the prisoners is a German. He's already working with us, as a mechanic. Which reminds me, there are two planes almost ready to fly. You'll know the joys of an air raid. Remember during the War?"

Megendank imitated the drone of a plane, the down swish of a bomb, to perfection.

"You poor saps will be up against it. Nothing will be left of this place. Abd el Krim's brother has been writing to get hold of pilots. Good money in it—if there's an aviator among you. The flyers will come in a few days. Why don't you quit and have it over with?"

Another night he would strike from a new angle.

"We are winning in the west, so you'll soon have a lot of Djelbi here, big, savage fellows. I'd been hoping to save you guys at the end, because I sort of like you. But there'll be no chance with those birds on the job. They'll slit your scalp from neck to nose and rip the hide off your head like turning a glove."

"You'll get scared, talking of such things in the dark," a Legionnaire said in the trench.

"Your work is useless. This thing won't be settled here. The question is being considered by the League of Nations at Geneva. Public opinion in England, in America, is turning for the Riff. You're a gang of suckers, that's what you are."

At some time during the night a rifle grenade would drop near Megendank who, after changing position, would swear and threaten. As there remained much ammunition to be used up, Kelburger no longer protested.

"What's the idea of doing that?"

"It's only that crazy kid, Breisch, showing off. You don't want to mind what he does, Megendank."

"He'll hurt some one, see if he doesn't! What's the matter with you, Breisch? Getting paid piecework instead of by the month?"

"Shut up, slob!" Breisch invariably replied.

Often Megendank would ask for Waldemar.

"Why don't you come? It's fixed up. Three big fellows split what you give. You get to the coast, and goodby troubles."

"Kelburger won't let me."

"Sneak out without his permission."

"Can't. He's always here. He's in this trench now—"

"Eh, Kelburger, you there? Say, why do you want to kill off these fellows? They'd have come over long since if it wasn't for you. Come on, I can fix it so you'll get more than a lousy pension

ten years from now."

Once, following the offer of a bribe, a man warned Megendank.

"Look out, the kid's coming after you—"

"So long—"

"Who spoke?" Kelburger asked, rising.

"Joan of Arc!" mocked a disguised voice.

The sergeant now agreed with Corporal Hohl that so long as the men stuck all was well. The spirit of the garrison was deplorable, would have shocked those at the rear. Kelburger was no longer justified in ending his messages with "Excellent morale." Yet, as force of habit was strong, pride eternal, that phrase concluded his nightly reports.

The end was merely a question of days. The efforts directed on Bou-Mabrouk since the Legion held it had been better organized, better handled than against the Senegalese. Moreover, the blacks had started out sixty-odd, a full section.

The Legionnaires fought on without dash, accepting even the fiercest attacks as part of a routine. At the first warning the man in charge of rockets would reach out mechanically, press the trigger to supply light. The machine gunners climbed to the bastions, the riflemen and grenadiers held the trench. No one was eager, as at the start, to close in with the bayonet. All preferred to keep under cover and drop foes from comparative safety.

On alternate days a plane flew over, dropped mail, medical supplies, chocolate, sugar. Once a week a bundle of newspapers was left. Too often the sacks fell outside the blockhouse's limits, and the food was lost. But Megendank evidently believed in cultivating good feelings, and would heave the mail into the trench during the night.

"Letters from your folks. You damned asses could see them if you had any sense."

The Legionnaires lived in constantly increasing filth. It was impossible to find soil that had not been turned over and the diggers' spades frequently uncovered the hygienic ditches of the Senegalese. Flies bred by the million, grayish flies, black flies, green flies, while the earth literally crawled with vermin.

Few of the men sacrificed part of their water allowance for a shave. They were a bored, unkempt, ill smelling, most unheroic aggregation. From constant handling, the playing cards had become limp and sticky. Dealing them was a new art, for a hasty gesture ordinarily left the cardboard glued neatly to the ball of one's thumb.

Another week dragged by, with its tumult of fighting and its dreary hours of boredom. There were fifteen men; the proportion of casualties was dwindling. As Hohl explained, the fewer they were the more room was left for a miss.

Kelburger reluctantly gave the order to evacuate the trench. The Legionnaires were too few to hold it securely. Even with skeleton crews on the bastions' platforms to man the machine guns, only seven men were available for trench duty—the telegraphist had to stay near his apparatus, and Waldemar did not expose himself to danger.

In answer to the sergeant's pessimistic reports, the French replied from their lines:

> Utterly impossible make operations to replace you at this time. Aviation reports your position in good state. Commander is instructed to continue defense with greatest energy. General of Division Freyberg, commanding sector, salutes your heroic dead, expresses highest personal appreciation your valor, conveys admiration entire army to valiant defenders of Bou-Mabrouk.

The gaunt, weary survivors of Framyr's section listened without comment and no enthusiasm whatever when Kelburger read off this cheering news. At that time all were working hard to prepare the office structure as a last refuge, for soon they would be too few to hold even the outside wall.

Breisch, a bit subdued, had tossed aside the grammar, and concentrated on

his mouth organ. Waltzes and polkas distilled their sprightly notes into the warm air, alternating with the lilting rhythm of military marches, or the latest song hit of the Foreign Legion, which all would hum.

"In the middle of the village
There stands a little white house
Amid greens and bushes of roses—
There, comrade, is my home!"

On the thirtieth day of the siege the Moroccans cut the wire and reached the wall. Grenades dispersed them, but not before they had contrived to blow up a section of the wall—and two Legionnaires with it. By that time all felt very old friends. Even Kelburger was taken in, never called sergeant save when giving an official order. The two were mourned more than the thirty-odd that had preceded them in the big leap.

But they held—

Hundreds of natives were camped around that handful, hesitant, perhaps daunted. They knew the high price that would be exacted. Even a handful of men, when armed with machine guns, automatic rifles, grenades, could kill hundreds.

THE SURVIVORS were not thirteen for long; an old superstition held true. A Belgian Legionnaire took a short cut to end his worries. He backed against a convenient wall, placed the muzzle of his Lebel under his chin and bore down on the trigger with his bayonet.

Several of the men wept, and all were depressed.

"Haven't you done enough?" Megendank screamed that night. "Can they ask for more than you have done? You've killed four times as many as did the Senegalese. You can surrender without shame. You shall be spared."

Kelburger saw that the argument was being considered by his men. They had, in fact, achieved more than could be expected of human beings. Should they yield now, who could blame them? One needed but to behold their rags, their festering wounds, not merely to forgive them, but to cry over them.

He rose to answer.

"The negroes held thirty-four days."

Perhaps Megendank read a concession in this brief statement, for there was no real attack for five days. The deserter came, and renewed his propositions.

"To the last man," Kelburger replied.

The natives made another effort. Kelburger whipped his followers into action. The task was simplified now; the attackers always huddled in the trench to take breath, and there was not much to do except drop grenades in the thick of them. The sergeant counted eighteen new corpses when the onslaught was over and had melted to a spiteful scattered fire. He and his Legionnaires had held out a day longer than had the blacks, had killed eighteen men to celebrate the occasion. Honor was safe.

But Kelburger understood that the Moroccans had learned a lesson, that they would bring scaling poles and ropes to climb the wall. One of the machine guns had jammed, beyond possible repair within the means of the blockhouse.

"Inform the rear that we'll probably fall tonight," the sergeant ordered the telegraphist. "We've been lucky so far, but it won't last forever."

"Can't. The thing's broken," the man replied. He added thoughtfully, "If you ask me, the room's hoodooed. Since the sub-lieutenant got himself killed inside of it, nothing has been quite right."

Kelburger pursed his lips, shrugged.

"Maybe it's better we say nothing more," he decided. "We're due tonight. I saw a lot of the slobs crawling down the slopes toward the valley this morning. Too many—"

The sentry called his attention.

"New stunt. Flag of truce. What do we do? Let them come?"

"Let's hear what they have to say."

Kelburger tied a towel to the muzzle of a rifle, waved it. All shooting stopped. A man wearing a white burnous came toward the blockhouse,

bearing the white flag. Kelburger knew him at once for a European by his stride. When he was very near, on the outside of the wire, he noted that the face was vaguely familiar.

"Hello, in there—"

It was Megendank, of course. Kelburger had not seen him during the siege, as he always spoke at night; and in the great number of men he had seen in the Legion, one face could not be remembered and identified. But he knew that voice at once, and climbed to the top of the wall to answer.

"What do you want?"

"Your surrender, Kelburger—"

"You know better."

"Your men will consent if you will."

"I won't!"

"Is that your last word?"

"Yes. You have five minutes to reach cover, Megendank."

"Blame yourself," the deserter shouted. He dropped the flag of truce.

In a flash Kelburger understood that he had been tricked into the open, that the fall of the flag was a signal. But the sniper was quicker than he, and he thumped to the ground like a heavy sack.

He felt no pain after the first impact on his chest. But when he tried to move he discovered that he was strangely weak, very dizzy. The nearer Legionnaires were staring at him, turned from the loopholes through which their rifles were pushed. Then, instead of coming to help him, they looked at each other questioningly.

Kelburger felt them to be tempted, and this gave him strength to kneel. But he had to support his weight on his hands, and he could not think clearly. Save to know that they must not surrender, must not give up. Who would take charge? Hohl was nothing but a human rag now, a half idiot, who babbled vaguely. Breisch was too young, too ignorant.

"Come on out," Megendank urged on the other side of the wall. "You're saved."

The Legionnaires still hesitated, waiting for one of them to make the first move. Kelburger peered eagerly into their faces, seeking a *man*. And he saw Waldemar, very close to him. He was very pale, his hands trembled, his lips parted. Those lips scarcely moved, he thought the word rather than spoke it.

But with his soul in his eyes, in his ears, Kelburger read and heard plainly.

"Treason," Waldemar was thinking.

"Waldemar!"

The man started, looked down at Kelburger. It seemed to the sergeant that he knew, was afraid of himself, was struggling. But he stepped forward.

"I'm here."

"Waldemar—" Kelburger grasped the other's hands—"you take command—and hold out—"

"I can not—"

"You were an officer, a German officer—a soldier. You know—what we have—done. Must not be spoiled. Too good a job—"

Waldemar's hands were limp and cold in Kelburger's grasp. His glance shifted widely.

"I want to live."

"Too good a job. A soldier—Legion—" Kelburger clutched at the sleeves, trying to pull himself erect. "Officer—my God—hold—"

Waldemar's eyes softened; his expression became almost gentle. There was immense understanding, pity in his face. Kelburger sobbed, dropped back. He had won.

"To your stations, everybody," Waldemar commanded. He reached the loophole, shouted, "That was a dirty trick, Megendank. Beat it or I'll shoot you like the dog you are. I give you two minutes."

"Thought you wanted to live," Megendank cried.

"We make no deal with assassins. You've lost ten seconds and the slope is long." Waldemar turned, took the rifle from the nearest man's hands. "Tell me when time is up, some one; that's all the chance he deserves—"

Kelburger hoisted himself on his elbows to see. He could not hope to reach a loophole.

"Time," Hohl said.

The detonation thudded, vibrated. Waldemar never missed.

The sergeant eased himself down, sighed. He felt very contented, comfortable, cool. The entire yard, with its occupants, was sliding through space into the limitless sky.

"They're coming," Waldemar announced. "Say, somebody—see if Kelburger's slipped."

The sergeant tried to open his eyes, feeling hands on his chest. But he could not. He wanted to sleep.

"Still breathing, but he'll never get up."

"All right. Get to work—"

Kelburger felt as if he had died a few seconds ago, just after Waldemar had dropped Megendank. But all was well at Bou-Mabrouk.

Excellent morale—

Forty-eight hours later General Freyberg's column reached the blockhouse. The French attack had been launched and the natives were everywhere in flight. Six Legionnaires were standing, presenting arms, when the first patrol of the Legion entered the gate. These and three wounded unable to walk, one of them Sergeant Kelburger, were what was left of a section.

The surgeon assured Kelburger, who was taking his ease between clean sheets, that a hole through the lung was not necessarily fatal. And within an hour, General Freyberg arrived to shake his hand and compliment him on a gallant stand. Kelburger, an opportunist, spoke well of himself, but did not forget comrades. He asked for official approval of young Breisch's promotion.

"He's young, General, but willing."

Freyberg's dark face grimaced a quick protestation.

"We can refuse nothing to the commander of Bou-Mabrouk!"

"General, I am not the actual commander. I turned the post over two days ago to the man who defended it until you came." Kelburger told what had occurred, briefly.

"Send for Waldemar," Freyberg spoke over his shoulder to a staff captain.

The ex-Legionnaire came immediately. He wore his old uniform, but it had been brushed; his boots glistened. He smiled at Kelburger. Then, although he had evidently decided to behave like a civilian before coming, glanced at Freyberg and stiffened to attention.

"Your hand, Waldemar. You're a soldier and a man. Count on me to obtain the proper reward."

"I beg your pardon, *mon Général,*" Waldemar replied, with a ghost of his old, sarcastic smile curling his lips, "but you can not award me a decoration. I was discharged from the Legion a month ago. I am, therefore, a civilian."

"Yet you held command here. Why? How?"

"By special request, *mon Général.*"

Kelburger saw Freyberg grin, heard him chuckle happily. The general was a former Legionnaire, knew the breed, and appreciated such answers.

"Waldemar, if you reenlist, perhaps we can—"

"My life tends in another direction, *mon Général.*"

"I see, I see—"

Nevertheless, Kelburger caught a note of puzzlement in the general's voice. Freyberg was trying to find some way to please, to show his admiration. For heaven's sake—the sergeant prayed fervently—don't let him be foolish enough to offer money to a man whose first name is Waldemar.

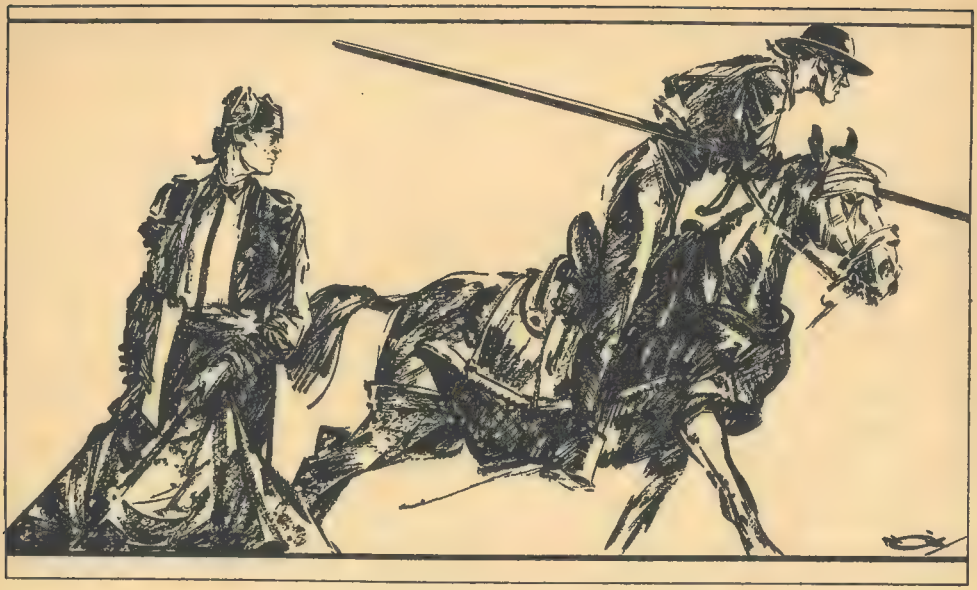
"You've served before coming to the Legion?" Freyberg asked.

"Yes, *mon Général.*"

"What rank did you hold in the—in your own army?"

"I was a captain, *mon Général.*"

"Well, Captain—" Freyberg's voice rang jovially—"if you have no other engagement for tonight, may I have the honor of your presence at dinner—by special request?"



BIG FELLA

By ROBERT CARSE

BIG FELLA sat there for hours in the little park across from the hotel, trying to figure it out while he watched for Levin. But it didn't make sense, no part of it. Levin was gone; Levin had ditched him; gone, without paying him his share of the gate, giving him his passport, even, or paying the hotel bill. And last night, just as he, Big Fella, had finally got to that big black boy he was up against, Levin had thrown in the towel.

That part—the fight—he could remember all right. That was so etched, so burned in his memory that he never could forget it. But from there on, it all blurred—from the moment Levin chucked in the towel and those other black lads, the friends and relatives of the big black African boy he fought, had surged over the ropes and come at him.

It just didn't make sense. That's what he had told them there in the hospital last night, when they'd put these bandages on him. No, because Sammy Levin had been his manager for almost a year; he'd handled him in six fights in the States, and in nine more over here in Europe. This one in Barcelona last night had been the sixteenth. And he'd won for Levin: eight decisions and four knockouts. Sammy had promised him, if they won this fight against the black here, to take him back to Paris and challenge the smooth Frenchman who called himself the Champion of Europe. But, now—

Big Fella's bandaged head was on his hands; he lifted it, and looked over at the hotel once more, still just faintly hoping that Levin might, somehow, be there. Then, for the first time, he

A Story of the Spanish Bull Ring

laughed at that thought, remembering what they had done to him over there in the hotel; kicked him out and kept his baggage for the bill which Levin had skipped last night.

Big Fella stood slowly up from the bench, running his sore, torn hands down the seams of his trousers.

"He done you, lad," he whispered. "He done you plenty; he put over a double-cross. Yeah—he must 'a' had money down on that black boy to win. Sure. An that's why he told you t' stick with 'im an' take it on points. Yeah. But he should 'a' had his black boy fight clean, not gougin' an' kneein' like that. If he had, maybe I'd 'a' got careless an' he would 'a' took me, an' now I'd have me a passport an' all my clothes, an' a place to flop an' even some money. Now I ain't got nothin' but a whole flock o' hunger. Sure got plenty o' that, though!"

Big Fella lifted his hands, closing the sore fingers. He stared across the street at the hotel, his great, square-set body forward in a kind of half crouch.

"Maybe," he said huskily, "I am a sap, Levin. But one thing sure, you're a dirty rat!"

That relieved him somehow; that released some of the incoherent tightness within him and he turned, not looking back at the hotel, and crossed the park. As he crossed, slowly, aimlessly, from the park down through the Plaza Catalunia and along the Lower Rambla, he passed a cable office. He stopped there, debating for a moment the possibility of cabling his uncle and guardian, Steve Barnes, in Texas. But it was only for a moment, for he recalled what Steve Barnes had said when he had come back

on a visit to the ranch the Spring he was graduated from the university, to tell Steve that he was going prizefighting with a smart egg from New York named Levin.

Steve Barnes hadn't said much to that. He had not even looked at him, just down at his own bowed legs inside his faded khaki overalls as he reminded him that usually the Barnes folks were cattlemen and dirt ranchers. But, maybe there was money in this glove fighting. And, if there wasn't, of course he could always come back. He was, said Steve, pretty sure that he and the other folks would still be there . . .

Big Fella's hunger was a definite, painful thing now. It made him giddy and a little clumsy; two or three times he all but bumped into people on the sidewalk. He was shamed and made angry by that. A full grown man of his size and strength shouldn't be bothered with such a thing as hunger; not like this.

"You're a fine breed o' ape, you are. Dumb—dumber'n they come. Only reason they even let you in that college was because you could butt them other boys aroun', playin' football. An' you couldn't even do that now! What you good for anyhow—you runaway cowpoke!"

That was an epithet, a self-delineation he had kept darkly, distantly in the back of his brain for months, for almost a year. The expression of that now was the climax, the high point of his anger. That anger ran flame swift through his brain. It seared into being there an idea which he at once liked and disliked, but that he at once acted upon, grinning wryly as he did so.

Across the wide sidewalk from him, smoke, the clatter of voices and glasses coming to him through its swinging doors, was a small all-night café. He did not hesitate. He swung toward it, past the few sidewalk tables and the three or four customers seated there, and right on into the bar.

That place was packed. Men sat noisily and close together about the tables; men stood shoulder to shoulder at the small, zinc covered bar. But, as he came into the place, his great bulk and white bandaged head thrusting colossus-like through the smoke eddies, some of them turned from their cards and glasses, looked at him and became silent. That was all that he wanted.

He stood between the tables and the bar. He looked slowly, almost majestically, about him. He spoke in his bad Border Spanish.

"Gentlemen," he said clearly, "I am broke. I am hungry. I am a little sick. I have no way of changing that, except one. I am a fighter. A man fighter."

That inaccurate phrase came clumsily from him and, not quite knowing that he did it, he slipped down into a fighting crouch, his hands up, to illustrate and to make clear his meaning. He smiled then for the room was silent and they were all watching him, even the bartender.

"I am not a beggar. It is not that I want to fight. But I will bet the coat on my back against a bit of bread and meat, a bit of beer, that no man can knock me off this handkerchief when I spread it on the floor and stand upon it. *Que dice usted?* What do you say? Is there a sport here, a real sport?"

And then, looking around him there, that taut grin widened on his bruised face became a real, a wide and charming smile. For three different men had answered him, thrust toward him from the bar, pulling their handkerchiefs from their pockets as they came . . .

IT WAS near four o'clock that morning when Big Fella met Don Jorge de las Aostas in the Nacional Bar on the Paseo de Gracia. By then, Big Fella was full of food, and equally full of liquor. With him, in a group that tightly ringed him in, were something like forty men. Most of those men were also full of liquor. They were Big Fella's close and perfervid admirers; some few of them were of that initial clientele from the first café he had entered on the Rambla.

The Nacional Bar was a subdued, an almost austere place, of dark wood, dark leather and soft lights. It was, in its way, the focal point of the night life of Barcelona, but that way was a very quiet one. It did not remain so after Big Fella and his cohorts entered.

Those men immediately and loudly anounced Big Fella for what he was and what he could do. One of the most fervent, a large man with a limp and a scarred face, recognized Don Jorge, and the man who sat at the Don's table. He made his appeal personal, yanking off his black felt hat and bowing.

"It is an American, señores," he said excitedly. "A box fighter. A marvel. He will stand on a handkerchief and he will let you hit at him, and you will not knock him from the handkerchief. No, your hand will not even touch his face or body—"

The man stopped. For Don Jorge was not looking at him; he was looking past him at Big Fella, who stood, happily grinning, happily drunk, at the bar.

"He is big, that one, and strong," said Don Jorge slowly, as if measuring the power, the potentiality of an animal—a bull. "But it seems that he would be slow." His deep, quiet, casual eyes were on the face of the man seated beside him at the table. "You would like to knock him from a handkerchief, Chaquito?"

What might have been a smile came over the face of the man called Chaquito. Only the eyes and the lips moved; the rest of that tight, small, darkly brown face remained as immobile as wood.

"No." He lifted his hands, long, tapering, but heavily veined. "I am not one of those box fighters, God willing."

"And you are right." What was almost a frown formed two long, fine lines between Don Jorge's white eyebrows. "But you are a *diestro* of bulls, and this one is very much like a bull. I am willing to place five thousand pesetas on you; half to you, if you win."

He did not wait for an answer; he looked up at Big Fella, slowly reeling at the bar, and at the men about him.

"You have five thousand pesetas, you?" he asked in the same slow, soft voice he had used with Chaquito, the *matador*. "I will wager you that—my man against your man." He pointed to the wiry, black clad *matador* as he spoke, and was then silent, waiting.

It was swiftly done; the money found and stacked beside Don Jorge on the table. A place was cleared, some of the chairs pushed back, the handkerchief spread. Grinning, Big Fella stepped upon it. Silently, stripped of his short, tight black jacket, Chaquito, the killer of bulls, walked about him in a slow, weaving, tightening circle.

Then he struck. It was not as a boxer might strike. It was a blow that a man would make with a sword in his hand, swift, hard, straight armed. And, because of that, Big Fella was almost caught, confused by the strange footwork, the quick white flick of the hand and arm. But not quite. Swift as that white flash his knees bent . . .

Like a cat, his eyes narrow and very dark, Chaquito turned as if to strike again. But it was over then. Don Jorge was lifting his glass and softly clapping, and the cohorts were jamming forward from the bar, yowling, yelling.

Big Fella did not let them place their hands on him. He motioned them toward Don Jorge and the money, put his arm about Chaquito's shoulder and pulled him to the bar.

"You're fast," he said in his bad Spanish. "Fastest I've seen. An' I've seen plenty, tonight. Twelve bars we've been in. Twelve. *Si, señor.* Have a drink? Two of them, *chico.* That's—that's—"

His voice mumbled out. As if suddenly very sleepy, he put his bandaged head down slowly on his arms, crossed on the bar. But those big arms slipped, and when he tried to hold on to the bar rim with his hands, there was no longer strength in his fingers and he tottered, slipped, fell over backward, limply.

"Leave him," said Don Jorge quietly,

tapping them with his fingertips on the shoulders so that they should stand back of him. "I will take care of this man. This man is for me—and the bulls."

For several hours the next afternoon, Don Jorge de las Aostas sat and talked with Big Fella in the hotel room he had got for him. It was cool in that room, quiet, and quite dark. The man on the bed and the man in the chair could hardly see each other. Don Jorge did almost all the talking.

"It is, then," he ended, "that you are broke, that you have been betrayed by your manager and left here, penniless and without a passport. I am *aficionado,* a lover of the bulls and of bullfighting. I raise bulls for the ring; that is at once my passion and my livelihood. That one, Chaquito, I have made him, and many others.

"You say that you know the beasts; you say that you have been *vaquero.* That—that and your speed—is more than enough to start with. I have been a great deal in America, in the United States. I know and like it very well; and there, where I was searching for and buying various breeds of stock, I have seen men like you, American *vaqueros,* work the bulls and throw them with their hands in rodeos. And that always interested me greatly, for, here in Spain, there are two old and famous sayings: 'No man of large stature may ever be a good bullfighter'; and, 'No man but one of Spanish blood may be a *diestro* of the bulls.'

"Those sayings I know are not true. You say that you have no false ideas about the horses; you know that in the ring they are blinded and drugged, suffer very little pain. You admit that you are a fighter; looking at you, I know that you are. The rest, I will gamble on; it will not be the first time I have done so."

"Now it is November. The bullfighting season is just over; it will not recommence until Easter. In that time, if you are willing, I will train you, make of you a bullfighter. I will send you to my *ganaderia,* my farm of the bulls in the Isla Menor, near Sevilla. I will train you in the bulls all Winter. I will make of you a pupil of the bulls. And if you are good, which, God willing, you are, in the Spring I will so arrange it that you fight as my protégé in the *novilladas,* the private practise fights, and then as an *alternativo,* an alternate fighter, in the real *corridas.*"

Don Jorge de las Aostas stopped and stood up. He came slowly from his chair across the shadowed room and closer to the bed. A soft bar of light from the shaded window fell across the almost emaciated, almost beautiful angularity of his face. He held out his hand.

"Get well quickly now. In several days the doctors will be through with you and I will come for you. Pardon?"

He leaned forward, so that he might hear the slow mumbling that came from the man propped against the pillows.

"No. Do not thank me. You will fully earn what little I have given or will give you. And, later, it will be I who will thank you."

Don Jorge stood back then, out of that bar of light. His heels met and he bowed.

"Anything you wish here is yours; I have told them so." He smiled, looking down. "The name I shall use for you in the ring has just come to me—*El Poco,* Little One. Good; there are few better so? Now go with God, Little One."

Again he bowed, then turned and left the room.

STRANGELY, thought Big Fella, rolling along that flat and dusty road with Don Jorge, this was like coming home. Somehow he had never felt that this small, gray and quiet man at his side was a stranger. But there was more to it than that, more to it than this wide, immense sweep of land, the smell and sound of cattle, the gently beautiful roll of the *vega* up from the river and toward the low, flat buildings of the ranch on the knoll beyond.

It was not until the big, long hooded English car swirled through the stone arch of the gate and came to a stop before the front door of the ranch-house that he fully understood. For, seeing that car, hearing its horn, the men who labored and lived here had come in from the fields, the corrals and barns to greet the man they worked for. And those were cattlemen, saw Big Fella, smiling as he recognized it. These dark skinned, bowlegged and leatherclad men were cattlemen, had been for uncounted generations, and this was their country. That was it; that was what he had felt and sensed back there. Grinning, wiping his hands down along the seams of his new suit, he stepped out of the car.

From that line of men there, one stood out alone from the rest. This man was tall, stooped and lean from years in the saddle. Even now a braided quirt hung from one wrist, and his short leather jacket and leather trousers were darkly stained with sweat. He smiled quietly as he waited there; smiled at Don Jorge, and at the stranger.

"This," said Don Jorge simply, "is Fraime. He runs this place: he is my *conecedor,* and trains the bulls . . . It is a new one I have found, Fraime. A *Yanqui,* one who has made his living fighting with his hands, and before that was a *vaquero Americano.* He will be here for the Winter with us, with you. In the Spring, he will fight the bulls, God willing. It is for us, for you, to teach him all that, Fraime. I have already found him his name; it is El Poco. Come, you, all of you, and we will show him this place, for he must like it here."

That was an old, a strong and strange place, Big Fella found. In the main house was one great central room, red-tiled, beamed, and with a huge fireplace at each end. Hides of bulls were on the floor; magnificently mounted horns were on the walls. Below them, row on row, were pictures, photographs of bulls, and men who fought bulls.

Slowly, Don Jorge named some of those famous men aloud. That one, he said in his slow, quiet voice, was dead. And that one, Joselito, was dead, killed in the ring; and Gallito, dead too . . . Straightening, he looked at the man beside him with eyes that seemed almost casual.

"There is an old saying in this business, Little One—'remember death'. But you, I think, understand that already. Let us go on, and we will show you the corrals—and the bulls."

He saw the corrals, the barns and the bulls that afternoon. The next day, after Don Jorge had left for the city, he went to work in and with them. To Big Fella, dressed in leather, spurs at his heels and a horse between his legs, it seemed that all Levin had meant and done was now like a bad and readily unbelievable dream. It was here that he belonged; it was here that his life now centered, and from here it would go on.

Throughout the days of his first week there he rode herd constantly with Fraime, learning the bulls. That task was for Fraime, he saw, a sacred profession and an art. Before, in Texas, it had almost been so for him. Here, it really became so. And at night, after the cool, quick dusk, he sat before the fire in the main room, weary feet stretched out before him, listening to the delicately sharp sadness of Fraime's guitar, and the songs he sang of the bulls, the herds, the ranges, all the old, familiar things. He was, he told himself as he sat there, happier than he ever thought he could be. That, all of it, had come to him through one man, through Don Jorge.

"It'll take," he whispered, his big hands clenched on his big knees, "a lot o' payin' back. But you can do that, Big Fella. You got to . . ."

On Saturday Don Jorge came again and with him Chaquito, the little *matador.* In a small side corral Big Fella stood silent and tense that afternoon, a sweat of nervous concentration breaking out on his forehead while he watched Chaquito play for him a two-year-old

bull. There, in that place, Don Jorge, Chaquito and he, Big Fella, all became different men. A sort of tautness, a common fixity of desire, settled over them, even upon the young bull, who trembled, snorted and flung up great clods of turf with his pointed, slick hoofs.

"It is there," said Chaquito, poised like a dancer before the tethered bull. "It is a space two inches wide between the bones of the shoulder that you must strike. To do so, you must have your sword and your body in and over the horns. So!" Swiftly, with a speed that Big Fella could hardly follow, he struck with the wooden buttoned sword he held, and the bull creaked back upon its rope, snorting, blowing white nodules of froth from its black nose. "That is the 'stroke of the kill', the *estocada*. If it is done wrong, you—the man who handles the sword—may die. Anyhow, he is not a good *torero*, and that you must be."

Chaquito wheeled, suddenly silent. Sweat was streaming from his face. He was panting. From his sleeve he pulled a tightly balled handkerchief, swiped it across his leathery skin. Then he laughed, seeing Big Fella's taut face.

"Come," he said, "come out here and bring that cape. We will start you on the footwork which you may practise all week. And when we come back, we can go on with the sword. Right, eh, Don Jorge?"

SO THAT WINTER passed. Big Fella learned to know and fight the bulls. Day upon long chill day, with the sword or with the cape, in front of a tethered bull or before a mirror, he practised until his arms and legs were lame and stiff with exhaustion. On the weekends, regularly, Don Jorge, Chaquito and oftentimes another great car full of *aficionados* and bullfighters came from the city to see him work, or to work with him, advise him.

And one Sunday night as they stood beside the car just before Don Jorge left for the city, the older man reached up and placed a hand on Big Fella's shoulder.

"You are good," he said quite softly, so that the others in the car might not hear it. "Fraime has done well for you, and Chaquito. Next weekend when I come we will have a small *tiento*, and you will actually fight a bull. Goodby until then, Little One. *Hasta luego!*"

But it was during that week, before Don Jorge came again, that Big Fella fought his first bull. It was the week of the first Spring roundup. From before dawn until far after dusk, Fraime and his wiry tough crew of *peones* rode the muddy valleys and slopes, herding in the stock from its Winter grazing. And although Big Fella should have been at his cape work, at his sword practise before one of the strawfilled targets in a side corral—and Fraime should have seen that he was there—Big Fella rode with the men, laughing, shouting, working the stock.

He found the two bulls down in a little muddy dip of the *vega*. He heard them before he saw them, and found them by the sounds they made—the thick, deep snorting, the clash and clack of locking horns, the thud of great hoofs and bodies. Riding to the edge of that dip, he looked down.

The two fought in the middle of the place. Beyond them, shivering, their eyes rolled back until the whites showed blankly, stood half a dozen calves and a cow or so. And one of those cows had a long red gash from shoulder to barrel. Big Fella cursed and slid down from his mount. It was the Spring madness; one of those bulls, the big black one, was *loco*. It was the black who had started the thing, rushed the cows and calves. And this other one, the younger, dappled bull, had seemed to consider those cows and calves his own and fought the black off.

But it would not last long now. The black was strong with his strange fury, and bigger, heavier. Already he had gored the dappled bull, raked his sides

and flanks, torn hide and flesh back to the bone. Big Fella grunted and swung back into his shallow saddle, fingers reaching for the leather *riata* at his cantle.

Carefully he prepared his rope, waited his moment, braced and threw. It was a clean cast, and caught the black one as Big Fella spurred his mount back from the edge of the dip. Creaking with the strain, the *riata* came tight about the pommel horn. The stout little pinto pony whickered, head down, forelegs spread.

"Steady, boy, steady," whispered Big Fella, watching the strands smoke around the pommel horn. "Hold up in there now, an' I'll yell for Fraime—"

And then, close in where it smoked about that pommel, the *riata* broke, whipped back like a snake, across Big Fella's face and eyes, across the pony. The next thing Big Fella clearly knew, he was sliding down the muddy bank into the dip, half blind, the coils of the broken *riata* about his legs.

Sliding so, he cursed himself for a fool, then heard behind him the deep drum of great hoofs. And, somehow, he turned and faced that bull. Four times, in the strange little amphitheater of the dip, the black one rushed him, goring for his body. Four times, using the knowledge Fraime, Chaquito and the others had given him, he wheeled beyond it, kept free, erect, alive.

The other bull stood back now, head down, panting, spent. Big Fella saw that only as a sort of blur; his whole being was centered on this other, the black one. Again it was swerving, charging him. Wide legged, ankle deep in the churned mud, Big Fella watched it.

At his own wrist hung his leather quirt. He grinned as he remembered that, lifted it and took it into his hand.

"Come on," he said aloud. "Step up, Blacky, an' let me give it you. Come on!"

It was as if the black bull had heard and understood through the red mists of its rage. For it charged straight at him. And he stood back in the yellow lather of mud and slashed for the black one's eyes with the quirt. Whether or not his blow struck home, he never knew. For, as he struck, he slipped in the mud and could not get up; hearing, as he tried to do so, the black bull turn and start back for him.

The rest, through the aching, cold horror of death that was on him, Big Fella more sensed than saw. He heard the other bull, the gored gray one. He heard the quick thunder of its hoofs, the whistling of its breath as it charged past him, and then the clash of horns and thud of bodies as the two beasts met in mid-charge.

The numbness of horror passed from him and he turned. The two bulls rested like a strange group of taurine sculpture, horns locked, great muscles rippling along their flanks and legs as they strained to break that hold and gore in again. It was so that Fraime and some of the *peones* found them and Big Fella when they rode to the edge of the dip, one of the *peones* leading Big Fella's pony. Gaping, they cursed, then understood and laughed, came down and put ropes on the two bulls and so dragged the black one away. After that, old Fraime sat looking at him, hands loose on his reins while Big Fella told him.

"All right," said the old man at last. "I will say nothing. The black bull is mad. But he will last until Saturday—for the *tiento*."

"Good." Big Fella swabbed the slick yellow mud from his face. "I'll have me the fun of killin' him then."

He did that on Saturday. He killed the mad black one in the *tiento*, the private killing of the bulls Don Jorge gave for some of his friends and a few newspaper reporters. Other men killed bulls there that afternoon, experienced men who were getting into shape for the coming season. But they made their kills before Big Fella; Don Jorge was holding

his mad bull and his pupil for the last.

To those men waiting there on the high corral wall, there was a great deal of drama and suspense about that thing. Not for Big Fella. He felt no emotion whatsoever but that of curiosity as he stood there, dressed in his worn leather clothing, the red silk cloth, the *muleta,* and the clean, thin sword in his hands. And when the bull came through the sliding gate raised by the *peones,* he did not change his position, just waited for it there, let it see him, charge him.

He did half a dozen *suertes de matar* then, complicated and dangerous plays of the kill. He made of his great lithe body a target for that mad bull, and then moved his body, and not his feet, and let the bull charge on, only turning when it turned. Then at last, marking the spot with a line drawn by his boot toe, he brought the bull to him, sighted down the lean glimmer of the sword blade, leaned up, and in, then back, and the bull thudded on, roared, tried to turn, could not, and died, breathing black gouts of congested blood. . . .

They jumped down from the wall and came running toward him, shouting, reaching for his hands, and old Don Jorge kissed him on both cheeks, clasped both his hands. But he only shook his head and shrugged his shoulders in a gesture he had unconsciously learned from Fraime:

"It was coming to him. An' if it hadn't been for that gray, dappled lad, I wouldn't have been here to do this for you. No, sir; that black one was a real bad *toro.*"

He and Don Jorge sat for a long time alone that night by the fire in the central room after the others had gone. Looking quietly at him, Don Jorge spoke:

"You are *verdad,* Little One. The real thing. Tomorrow, through those reporters who were here, all Spain will know of you. Next week, there is the Easter *feria* and the first fight at Sevilla. You must see that, watch the big ones work. For, the week after, I have now arranged that you fight at Barcelona, as an *alternativo.* Chaquito will fight, and another fine 'sword', Larencan. You will just do the *quites* for them, some of the cape work in taking the bulls off the horses. Some of our bulls, from here, will be there, and some of the big Atencos from Mexico. For you, it will be fine training. After that, in another month or so you will start killing your own."

Don Jorge stood, and Big Fella stood with him, to see that the other man was smiling.

"A fitting thing for you, eh," said Don Jorge, "to go back to Barcelona like this, after all those wrong things that happened to you there?"

"Yes," said Big Fella slowly. And then he too smiled.

IT WAS early Sunday morning when Big Fella went out to the arena in the Plaza de Toros in Barcelona. He and Don Jorge had come in from the *ganaderia* the day before. At the hotel had been waiting for him all the things he was to need today—his uniform of green silk and gold, his four slim swords in their black case. He had tried on the uniform, tried the swords, then promenaded the Rambla with Don Jorge and Chaquito. There, women had smiled at him, leaning from their cars and carriages to follow him with their eyes; and men—many men—stopped on the wide sidewalk to bow before Don Jorge, shake hands with Chaquito, then with him. All that had been very strange and very tiring. Even then, though, he had not been able to sleep when Don Jorge left him at the door of his room at ten o'clock. He had lain, for the most part, wide awake all night, staring at the darkness, reliving that fight with the mad black bull, and the great fight which he had seen at the ring in Sevilla during Easter week.

It was the thought of that which kept him awake: the thought that this week, right now, he would be doing the same

things those *toreros* had done there on the smooth, blood dappled sand in Sevilla. Not that he was afraid, he told himself. Hell, no. And not that he was worried by the thought of the crowd; he'd had plenty of that, playing football, and when he had boxed for Levin. The thought of the horses had not bothered him much, either; they had been old, drugged, armored, even their ears tied so they couldn't hear. As for the bulls, they had been given a good sporting chance. There, in Sevilla, he had seen eight of them go, and every one of them had been *"toro bravo"*—fighting bulls—who had all but got the men who faced them before they had been killed.

No, it was none of those things. Just that, sitting there beside Don Jorge in the box, he had thought that he had no real right to be down in there; and that somehow, if he was, he wouldn't feel right. Somehow, all this thing about him and the bulls was mistaken. Why, he didn't know. It was like a dull headache in the back of his head, and no more. Nothing he could lay his hands on; nothing that he could actually talk to anybody about, even himself. . .

Near four o'clock he had jumped out of bed, paced the room, looked at himself in the mirror, opened and shut the sword case, fingering those blades, balancing them, trying their play and suppleness, the heft of their grips. But that did not quiet him either.

Near five, he got dressed in his street clothes and sat near the window, smoking many cigarets and lining the stubs up neatly on the window sill, staring down into the foggy darkness of the street below.

"You're a fool," he told himself. "You won't even meet a bull horn-to-sword this afternoon; do nothin' but a little cape work. . . ."

But at quarter to six he went out and found a dozing carriage driver, had the man drive him through the silent streets to the bullring. There was light, movement and noise there. Venders of beer and soft, sweet drinks and prospective sellers of the meat that was to come later from the sands of the arena within, were already setting up their booths, watched by a sleepy civil guard.

There was another guard by the door leading into the *toril*, the bullpen, but he recognized him, bleakly smiled, and let him through. Big Fella almost ran then, hearing and smelling the bulls. There were five of them, the big gray Mexican bulls, in the stout, straw filled pen, milling slowly around in circles, occasionally rasping horns with each other or tossing their tails and hoofs as they bellowed.

He stood in silence, just looking down at them, that nervousness which had been upon him in the hotel room gone away now. Suddenly a grip he knew was laid on his shoulder, and he turned, smiling. Fraime, dressed in his simple ranch clothes, stood there. But Fraime did not smile back at him. He said swiftly:

"You should not be here, Little One. Don Jorge would be a bit more than angry if he found you here. Go back and get your sleep."

Big Fella shook his head at that.

"Can't sleep. Been trying all night. How about you?"

"We have just got in from the *ganaderia* with the bulls. We struck a mudhole on this side of the river and broke an axle. We have been up all night long, fixing that and getting here."

"The bulls?"

Fraime reassured him, saying:

"All right. The same for them, standing in the truck, as it would have been in the pen all night. Here they come now."

They fell silent. In the passage leading into the *toril* a heavy gate had just grated back, and they could hear the hoarse, familiar yells of the *peones*, the thud of the pointed poles they used to handle the bulls, and the thrashing boom of the animals running along the wooden passage toward the *toril*.

THEY came out swiftly, four of them, cleaving a sharp way through the other beasts already there. Big Fella laughed, feeling a sense of pride and proprietorship for that four; he knew all of them, he told himself, had ridden herd on them all Winter long. Then, not quite knowing that he did so, his hand licked out and caught at Fraime's lean wrist.

"Say," he said huskily, "that last one, the dappled gray with the scar—he's my pal. That's the *toro* that pulled the black one off me, down in the dip. You —" his narrowed eyes swung toward Fraime's face. "You—"

Fraime smiled, quietly releasing his wrist.

"He is one of the best four-year-olds we have. He was sent expressly at Don Jorge's orders—just because of what you said of the way he fought there in the dip. He is *'muy flamenco'*, a fine bull. It is his kind which makes Don Jorge's brand famous, and allows the *patron* to keep and train such men as you for the ring. But do not worry, Little One. Very probably that one, or none of our bulls, will go in the ring this afternoon; it will be all the Atencos. And even then, it will not be you who will fight them; you will not even lay hand on a sword. Go, now!"

Quite forcibly, old Fraime took him by the shoulders and started him toward the street and his carriage.

He was asleep, still fully dressed, when Don Jorge, Chaquito and Don Jorge's valet came to see him costumed for the ring that noon. A dull, gray sort of inertia rested on him as the English valet dressed him. It was still with him when they rode through the crowded, cheering streets, and had not left him as they lined up for their parade into the arena with Larencan, the senior fighter, in the position of precedence at the right.

Outside a trumpet blew, the sliding door rose up and they marched stiff legged out into the sunlight and the cheers of the arena, the rich hems of their *capas de lujo*, their ornamental capes, dragging the sand. Behind them, gay in its colors but still somber in its detail, marched the little column of the capemen, the *banderilleros*, the tensely erect horsemen with their lean lances and, last, the mule teams for the bulls and horses that would be killed.

Before the *palco*, the official box, while the crowd yelled and stood, they halted solemnly. Looking up, Big Fella could make out just one face: that of Don Jorge. He watched that face fixedly while Larencan made his formal speech and while another trumpet blew, and they turned and marched back.

He stood at the edge of the ring then, his working cape in his hands, his little sword boy leaning sweaty and excited over the edge of the barrier right behind him. Another trumpet cut the thick waves of the crowd's shouts. The door of the *toril* slid up, down. The bull was in the ring. Big Fella cursed and slightly relaxed: it was one of the big Atencos, and not the dappled gray one, not the one who had done that for him, back there that day. Damn funny, he thought, how long ago that seemed now.

He stopped thinking then. He shook out the folds of his working cape and advanced a little from the barrier. The *banderilleros* were beginning to work on the bull.

Larencan had that bull. He was a long time in killing it, and when he did so, there were three swords in its throat and shoulder and the crowd was very silent, except for an occasional hiss or the whirr of a beer bottle through the air. Standing beside Big Fella by the barrier, Chaquito cursed the crowd.

"That is always the way. They know that Larencan is getting old; they know that he was hurt in South America this Winter, is not yet over that wound and is fighting his first *corrida* of the season. Still, they do this. That, *chico*, is the life! Maybe I will get an extra bull to

kill after all; Larencan does not seem as if he is good for two more. Ah! Here comes mine. Let 'em yell now, the rats!"

They yelled then, but they yelled for Chaquito, and for the bull. Chaquito was savagely swift with that job; it was soon over and, sweating just a little, he stood back again beside Big Fella.

"Maybe that will hold them," he said, water jug at his lips. "Maybe they will be a bit more easy on Larencan now, give him a square chance."

But that was not so. The crowd booed and whistled when Larencan came forward to meet his second bull.

"He will get it," whispered Chaquito. "Watch. He is angry now, and careless. That was too close, that pass. That—there! O-ho! Did I not tell you? No, he is not dead; that was just through the thigh. But it means now that I will have to fight all his bulls, along with my own. You? *Por Dios,* no! Not unless you have to, not unless the president of the arena commands you to take a sword. Now, watch Chaquito!" Grinning, the little man whipped a new sword from his case. "He will show the pigs how it should be done!"

Chaquito did that. In straight succession, within the space of two hours, he worked, played and killed three bulls, one of them his own and two of them those of the wounded Basque, Larencan. It was the little man's day of days; by the rigid etiquette of the ring, it was his right, as the succeeding senior *matador,* to kill all the remaining bulls scheduled for the afternoon. It was a rare honor and an extremely rare and dangerous feat, in which, if he succeeded, he would make himself famous wherever men fought bulls.

Chaquito nearly achieved that. He just missed accomplishing it. For he, as these hours passed, was carried to heights of shrewd, subtle perfection he had never before realized. With him, believing in him, screaming at every stride he took, every cape flick and body twist, the crowd dreamed also that he could do the almost impossible. Standing jammed down against the inner barrier, they demanded of him that he do it. And, looking up as the third bull fell to its knees and rolled over, he smiled and shouted out that he could—still had the power to go on. . . .

The crowd turned and yelled at the president, the ring officials.

"One more bull for him! Another! The last! A real Spanish bull—one of Don Jorge's bulls! *Si, si,* that!"

Where he leaned against the barrier, rigid hands pressed hard against rigid thigh muscles, Big Fella told himself slowly aloud that it would happen, it would come. It was all a part of this incredible wildness here; it couldn't be otherwise. The crowd would not allow it. He did not have to look up when the trumpet blew, the *toril* door slid open and the gray, dappled bull ran snorting, blinking out into the ring.

It was there, before that bull, that Chaquito's skill, his strength and courage, deserted him. He had done enough; now he was trying too much. His feet fumbled as he went through the formal steps of the earlier passes; his hands were heavy and awkward with the cape. He stared at the gray bull through red rimmed, bloodshot eyes as the *banderilleros* and the *picadores* worked at it, maddening it, infuriating it—not for him, but for the crowd.

Big Fella did not, could not, watch that bull. As if he were all alone there in that place he watched Chaquito, strangely fascinated. Then it came; then it happened. In a croaking, half heard voice, Chaquito had ordered the other capemen and the *banderilleros* off. There was to be no more. No, he would fight this bull alone now. Now, he would kill it.

DULLY, he tried to do so, knowing that it was the last, and that after it he would be through, would be as famous as Belmonte, as the greatest of them. But that skill, that strength, was no longer in him. Four times he tried the

estocada, and broke four swords against the shoulder bones. Screaming hoarsely, he asked for a fifth sword.

Before him he fluttered the cape in a *media-veronica.* He called at the bull, strode toward it, staggering, head on one side. And at him, him who had thrust those burning shafts of raw pain into his muscles and flesh, the gray one charged. Not at the cape—at him.

Chaquito never made that thrust; the horns caught, spun and tossed him first. Big Fella saw that, then he was running, his cape in his hands, to get between the bull and Chaquito.

He did so. He stood stiff legged and cursed the others off, watched them while they picked up Chaquito, took him away. In his own hand, pushed there by his sword boy as he had run forward, was his sword. He forgot that, he forgot everything else as he looked at the bull.

It stood yards from him. Its great head and horns were down. Its legs were spread and motionless. It stood as it had that day when locked with the black one. It stood, he knew, waiting for him to kill it.

Dimly, then, he heard the crowd. He made out the blurred words of its shouts, demanding that he go on, appease it, the crowd, and kill this bull. He laughed as he stood there, sword and cape loose in hands, before the bull. For, suddenly, now he understood many things. He understood what had kept him awake all night long, what that dull ache of doubt had been in the back of his brain.

It was just that this bull here did not have a chance—no more than he himself had had a chance against the black boy in his last fight in the ring under the crooked Levin. The bull could not win. That was it. This bull had beaten Chaquito and, even if it beat him, it still would have no chance. Some other man would come forth to kill it—and another and another and another until, at last, it would be done. The bull would lose finally, and die. . . .

Suddenly he turned his back upon the gray bull and walked to the edge of the ring, where they stared down at him. And he raised his sword and spoke clearly—to one man: to Don Jorge, the one man he knew or owed a debt here.

"I can not kill that bull. That bull should not die. Five times Chaquito tried to kill that bull, and couldn't. He's earned his right to live; five times he's beat the man that tried to beat him. Let him live—let him live, if I can take him with my two hands and put him down. And, if I do, let me keep him, train him, raise others with him! What is it—yes? And, if I can't, let another man kill him—with a sword!"

Big Fella stood straight and silent, watching Don Jorge de las Aoastas above him in the box. And he saw Don Jorge turn and talk with the man beside him—the president of the arena. Then he saw Don Jorge swing back and smile at him, and lift his hand. . . .

Across his knee Big Fella broke the sword he held, to toss the two pieces up into the crowd. He was smiling as he turned, flexing the long, flat muscles of his arms inside the tightness of his gold-heavy jacket, and went back to the bull.

He stood before the bull and looked at it, talked to it. He measured it as he had not done before. He spoke to it still as he picked up the red silk *muleta* from the sand behind him and advanced. For the first time since he had faced it the bull bellowed, then charged. And Big Fella turned, took two quick little steps, and then went in sidewise for the horns.

He grasped them in his hands. He locked all his great and fierce strength upon them. He set his feet in the sand, so that from his ankles to his head his body was one immense and quivering bow of strength. He was silent; the bull was silent. There was no sound but the low, choked scream of hysteria from some woman in the crowd.

Then, sharp as a shot, the seams of his jacket gave, and it fell loosely from

him, down over his hands, down over the bull's horns. And Big Fella gave a great cry and bent farther, farther down.

Underneath that pressure, underneath that fluttering, masking jacket, the bull's head bent until it could bend no more. One vast, straining leg slid then, and another and, suddenly, the bull gave and went over. And Big Fella was upon it, holding it there until it was still, did not move, did not strain any more.

He got up then and his narrowed eyes lifted to the crowd. It was as if a hurricane had suddenly struck down upon the immense, dark bowl of the arena. Great blasts of sound, which he could not understand, but which he knew were meant for him in hysterical praise of what he had done, thundered up. Flowers and gold set amber combs flung down by women showered on the sand about him. Hats, handkerchiefs and money flung down by men brushed his face and body. And slowly he lifted his right hand and smiled in salute to them. . . .

With that he turned and motioned to the *cuadrilla* men and the drivers of the mule teams. They came running to him, did as he softly told them to do, sliding thick straps and ropes in under the unconscious and trembling bull. He did not look at the crowd again as he went forward at the head of that strange little procession. He did not even try to seek out Don Jorge. He was intent only on the bull, struggling now back into consciousness.

It was in the little *toreros'* dressing room underneath the arena that he met Don Jorge. To him, as if he had not seen him for a long time, Don Jorge nodded, and he silently nodded back as he plucked at the tight folds of his long sash. But, he saw, turning when he was finished dressing and was ready for the street, that Don Jorge was still there, and that Don Jorge was smiling. The words broke from Big Fella then.

"You were right, and then you were wrong, señor. A big man can fight the bulls; but not a man who hasn't Spanish blood. You have given me the technique—but you could not give me the heart to kill a bull like that. It wasn't fear that held me back. You saw that, Don Jorge, and they saw it—out there just now."

The slow course of his awkwardly pronounced Spanish words came to an end. His eyes had just passed over his sword case, open, the blades a-gleam against the dark plush. For a time standing quite still, he looked at them; and then he transferred his gaze to his great brown hands.

"Those," he said, glancing again toward the swords, "are all right for some lads, maybe. But me—I like these."

Smiling, he raised both his great fists. Then:

"Me, I owe you a lot, señor. For you, I am willing to go on; I could fight, maybe, in the third rate rings, and make money to pay you back, and to pay myself—" He stopped and, watching him, Don Jorge knew that he was thinking of that man, Levin, and what Levin had done to him. "But, I know that money means very little or nothing to you. And 'most anybody knows it don't mean much to me. So—"

"So," said Don Jorge softly for him, "you will go back to the *ganaderia* with the gray one, the one you have beaten tonight. You will stay there; you will breed the gray one, and many others. You will become Fraime's assistant, if you wish. And, if you wish, when Fraime retires, you will become my *conecedor,* and have Fraime's job. That will please you, yes? With that you will be happy?"

"Say—say—" said Big Fella in English, having great difficulty in finding the right words, "wasn't that there last question just a little—unnecessary?"

"Doubtless," said Don Jorge, and smiled again.

Dead Men At LOGTOWN

AS TOLD TO HERMANN B. DEUTSCH
By RALPH BEARDSLEY

NOT until Wednesday, April 15, did press dispatches tell of the ruthless slaying of twelve Americans the preceding Saturday by bandits in the northeastern area of Nicaragua. The same dispatches, telling of the pursuit of the bandits by Marine-officered units of the Nicaraguan Guardia Nacional, carried an inconspicuous paragraph to the effect that the bandit leader, Pedro Blandon, had been killed by "Ralph Beardsley, a civilian who accompanied the troops, and who brought in the bandit jefe's *sword, and papers from Sandino found on the body." The following story is that of the entire operation, as told by Beardsley himself.*

FOR us in Puerto Cabezas, April 11th of this year was just another Saturday. And when we heard that Logtown, eighty miles away, had been looted early that morning, we assumed some of the laborers had got drunk and were raising hell. Sandino? We hadn't thought of Sandino for months. There had been rumors, of course; but there are always rumors, and so we thought no more than that some of the laborers were on a tear. I know that was what Captain Harlan Pefley of the Guardia thought, because when he heard of the disturbance, he started for Logtown about ten o'clock in the morning on a little railroad motor car with only four men.

He had been in my office and we were having a heavy argument about the best way to build a pen for his pet deer. Then he got the news. He and Lieu-

tenant Clyde Darrah were the only Guardia officers left in Puerto Cabezas, because the others were all attending a general court-martial at Bluefields. As a matter of fact, when some of us suggested to Captain Pefley that it might be wise to take out more of an expedition than just those four men, he snapped back that he didn't need any more to run off a bunch of looters.

It must have been just after noon that we learned we weren't dealing with a crowd of laborers on a spree. That was when we got a telephone message from Wawa Central informing us that Captain Pefley had been ambushed just outside of Logtown. The captain was dead and so—as we were told—was a company employee, William Selser, whom Pefley had picked up on his way up the track in his motor car. The same message told us that a number of persons, including four Americans, had been killed at Logtown at daybreak that morning by bandits, who had looted the place and burned the commissary.

That put an entirely different complexion on the whole situation, of course. Lieutenant Darrah had automatically become commander of the forces in the district through the death of his senior officer, Captain Pefley. Both of them were on detached duty from the Marine Corps, as officers of the newly organized Nicaraguan militia, the Guardia Nacional, which was to take over the job the Marines had been handling in the country during the occupation.

Lieutenant Darrah organized at once. He ordered a locomotive fired up. He got out two machine guns; he fortified a flatcar with sandbags, and placed riflemen and machine guns on it; he equipped another motor car to follow the armored train and act as rear guard—and he did it all inside of an hour, for it was only two o'clock in the afternoon when he left "to make contact with the bandits". I went with them. Darrah and I were close personal friends. I had served with the Canadians in the World War and knew something about soldiering. They called me a "volunteer civico assistant to officers" in their official reports later. But I didn't mind what my status was as long as they took me along.

We had a light Lewis machine gun, a heavy Vickers, twenty men and no clearly defined plan of action outside of a determination to make contact as soon as possible. Our first stop was at the switch where we had to wait for the passing of the motor cars that were bringing back the patrol with which Captain Pefley had started out that morning.

There were two motor cars coming back. Four natives rode on the front one. Captain Pefley's body had been lashed to the second, and William Selser was tied beside him; but Selser was not dead. While the two motor cars went into the switch to pass us, I heard Selser talking to Captain Pefley. He was delirious of course, and he was holding the dead captain's hand, just talking away and telling him stories. Not very pleasant, that. Selser's spine had been severed by a bullet just below the neck, but he did not die until four days later.

All this made us the more determined to push on and make contact with the bandits, whom we hoped to find still at Logtown. We thought maybe they would try to ambush us, as they had Captain Pefley, and that is why we had eight men and a machine gun on a motor car trailing us. If the bandits opened fire on our train, the motor car behind us could stop and just sweep them out of the bush with the machine gun.

But the next people we saw were more company employees at Moss Farm. That is where the railroad divides, the track forming a Y, each arm of which is about ten miles long. At the end of the left hand arm is Logtown. At the end of the other arm is D'Antoni Farm. Moss Farm is right

at the junction. We stopped to get whatever information they could give, but there was little enough they could tell us outside of the fact that, so far as they knew, the bandits were still at Logtown.

So we pushed on. Poor devils—they thought that with us and the machine guns between them and Logtown they would be safe that night. All but two of them were dead and chopped up a couple of hours after we had passed. Of course, we didn't find out about that until the following day, when I had a machine gun set up right above what was left of one of the bodies.

We took the left hand arm of the Y and made only one other stop before we reached Logtown. That was at a point where we spied some saddled mules tied out in the bush. I got down with six men and started into the jungle. Darrah and the others protected our advance with the machine gun, but that is not what kept the bandits from wiping us out—for we learned later that there were twenty-five of them there.

They had learned from sympathizers who had listened in on our phone calls that we were on the way, and they had laid the same ambush for us with which they got Pefley. What stopped them was the sight of that motor car behind us with the other machine gun. We gave up the search after a bit, and all of us pushed on into Logtown, which was in flames by the time we arrived.

WE LEFT a crew on the fortified train to protect us with the machine gun and searched the town, but found no one. Three or four natives came in from the bush, where they had been hiding until they saw us take possession of the place. They told us that after looting Logtown the bandits had divided into three bodies. One group had gone on down the track to ambush us; another—they supposed—had gone across country to D'Antoni Farm, at the tip of the opposite arm of the Y, and the third group had gone to Cuyutigne, which is about eight miles farther inland than Logtown.

Unfortunately, the band which the natives assumed had cut over to D'Antoni Farm had merely disappeared into the banana plantations that are spread between the two arms of the Y, and then, in that concealment, they had turned off at right angles and crept down to the junction where they fell upon the American company employees waiting at Moss Farm. They massacred them there in the dusk. Only two escaped. They shot the rest and hacked them down with *machetes;* and they chopped up the bodies of those boys to whom we had been talking less than two hours before.

The natives—the few who had ventured back to Logtown from the bush when they saw us take charge—said the group that had gone on toward Cuyutigne seemed to be the main contingent. Darrah therefore left a sergeant, seven men and a machine gun at Logtown, to protect our fortified train, while the rest of us pushed on afoot to Cuyutigne.

By the time we got there it was well after dark—about 8:30, I should judge—so Darrah sent in a man as a spy who, when he returned, reported he had listened to conversations in several houses but could learn nothing about bandits being there. Darrah and his men therefore surrounded the town, and we entered and made a thorough search. The only persons in the place were some old women and children. Though we were unable to get anything to eat there, and had had nothing since early morning, we made camp and posted guards, to wait for daylight.

None of us got much sleep, and we broke camp at 4:30 in the morning and hiked back to Logtown, still hungry. That was when we learned of the massacre at Moss Farm—through a message from Pedro Blandon himself.

Blandon was the principal *jefe* of the Sandino forces, and he sent us word by a native of the massacre he had staged

at Moss Farm, inviting us to meet him there and get the same dose.

We were eager to accept General Blandon's invitation. We didn't want to keep him waiting. But we had to stock up on some kind of provisions. So we caught some chickens that were running loose—about a dozen of them—and tied them up and put them behind the sandbags on our fortified flatcar; and I found eight or nine eggs and shared them with Darrah and the sergeant. We were going to eat them later.

The engineer of our train told us he did not know whether he could get as far as Moss, because there were only about three inches of water left in the tender; but we started. We made it to the junction, right enough. That's where the Moss Farm water tank was. You sort of have to get the picture in your mind to understand what happened. Just beyond the junction, on the main line, was Moss Farm, and about fifty yards beyond that, a wood trestle bridge over a deep gully, beyond which the track ran through a deep cut, with hills on both sides, and about five hundred yards beyond that was the steel bridge over the Wawa River—Snaki Bridge, it is called.

Well, just as we crossed over the wooden trestle bridge, we made contact with the bandits. They were on both sides of the railroad cut, on the high banks, ready to ambush us. Our sandbags were not much protection here, because the bandits up on the banks were so far above us that it was like dropping marbles off a table to shoot at us. The first volley wounded the engineer; put a bullet through his left wrist and paralyzed his arm. Knocked him out, too. Subconsciously he reached forward and shut off his throttle. There we were, stalled, right in the head of an ambush. Not so good, that.

The Guardia opened fire. Darrah worked the machine gun and I fed for him. We silenced the fire from those slopes in about three minutes, by which time our engineer revived. However, instead of pulling on up to the water tank, where there was a bandit patrol that we could have taken care of, he backed away. Not that he got very far, for the water in the tender finally gave out and that stalled us for good.

So we debarked without losing any time about it, and made a rush for the buildings at Moss Farm. With his machine gun, from there, Darrah cleaned the bandits out of the slope on our side of the tracks, while we fortified the farm and brought in our wounded man. That wasn't the engineer, by the way. We had asked him and the flagman, when we abandoned our train, whether they wanted to come with us or take to the bush on their own. They went for the bush. But one of our Guardia was terribly wounded. A bullet had passed through his nose and had torn out one eye, and another had gone through his shoulder and lodged in his body. But not a whimper out of him. All the Guardia have plenty of guts.

WE HAD suffered other serious losses, too. As a matter of fact, you might call them critical without overstating the case. In the general confusion every last one of our chickens took it on the wing and got away, and the eggs were all permanent casualties.

The commissary at Moss had been stripped clean; but fortunately the cisterns were intact, and we got fresh water, at least.

We knew we'd have to get food soon, so we wrote out a message. I don't remember exactly how we worded it, but what we wrote was from the heart. We made it plain we needed food and ammunition. Then we tied the letter to the control wheel of one of those little railroad motor cars, lashed down the levers, started the motor and sent it off down the track without anybody aboard to be killed in running the bandit ambush, but with the engine going for all it was worth. We figured it would run

the ambush to Puerta Cabezas.

We watched that little car go down across the wooden trestle bridge and gather speed as it approached the Snaki steel bridge some five hundred yards below and then, just before it hit the steel bridge, we saw it shoot straight up into the air. After that there was a cloud of dust to mark the spot where it had come to earth once more. That was how we learned the bandits had taken out rails at the bridge, and consequently had us blocked in.

None of us felt the least bit like cheering. Pretty much down in the mouth and all that, you know. And then we heard a distant drone. The louder that drone got, the sweeter the music of it sounded to us. For here came two of the Marine amphibian planes, flying at about four hundred feet along the line of the tracks.

The old morale went right up as they buzzed toward us. Darrah made the men strip to the waist and he used their white undershirts—at least they were the whitest things we could muster on the spur of the moment, though we'd been out in the bush all night—to lay out signal panels on the grass. He signaled to the planes that we needed food and ammunition, and also where the bandits were, using their regular code. His signal panels may have been dirty undershirts, but they did the work right enough.

One plane went on up the track and the other made a drop to us, floating down a note to let us know they would go back to Puerto Cabezas and get us food and ammunition. Then the other plane came back and made a drop, to tell us the bandits were burning Vacarro Farm, and if we could send out a detachment, the plane would work with us and try to hold them there till we arrived.

We started off like a shot, leaving a guard at Moss, of course, but when we got to Vacarro it was in flames and the bandits were all gone. If we had only known it, they had stored their commissary loot in some of the small buildings there, and we could have helped ourselves to all the provisions we needed. But seeing the place deserted, we hurried back to Moss Farm. By that time both planes had left for the Port.

Coming back from Vacarro to Moss, we must have seen the bodies of eight or nine natives along the track. Blandon and his outfit slaughtered a lot of them. Just the other day I got a letter from the farm superintendent telling me they are still finding bodies, every now and then, where they are setting up the work on the farms again. At Moss Farm, too, we could see the bodies of three of the Americans who had been killed. One of the bodies was down on the open slope below where one of our machine guns was set up. But we tried not to look at them any more than we could help. It would have been senseless to have exposed men to enemy fire to pull in the bodies.

Earlier that day we had more news direct from Blandon. A German employee of the company, a man named Stringus, had been captured at Moss Farm the night before, but had been spared on the orders of Blandon himself, who said he didn't want to kill Germans or Englishmen, but only Americans. He had been kept a prisoner, but in the excitement of our brush with the bandits at the water tank that morning, he managed to escape, and made his way roundabout through the bush to us. He said Blandon had about fifty men with him, and they were well armed.

That wasn't at all bad. We felt we could handle that situation right enough, if we could only get something to eat. But in the midafternoon another escaped man came in—Austin Murphy, a British subject, who had worked with Blandon years before on a mahogany cut, and who had been given a passport and a release by Blandon on condition that he go on into the interior and spread the word as to how strong Blandon's forces were. He told us that five hundred bandits were coming down behind us from the Wanks River country under

Pedron, and that the five hundred expected to arrive that night so that Pedron and Blandon could join forces, march on Puerto Cabezas together, and sack it.

That put us in a devilish tight hole. We realized right then that we had to get out, because with fifty men in front of us, five hundred more on our backs was too big a bite. Fortunately the bandits had made their one serious mistake at Moss Farm. They had smashed the railroad motor cars everywhere else, but had overlooked them here. They had left two big ones, in fact. And while Murphy and Darrah were conferring, I went over them and found them to be in working order. We decided we would use them and cut our way through, trying to replace the rails at the Snaki steel bridge where our riderless handcar had gone over the embankment.

I WAS on the first car with eight men. Darrah was on the second car with the rest and with the machine guns. The plan was that Darrah should follow along behind us, and keep us covered with the Lewis while we tried to replace the missing rail or rails. So we started our lead car like a bat out of hell. The bandits guarding the bridge were sitting on the track and we were in among them before they knew it. We must have been making about forty-five miles an hour, and they tumbled off the track on both sides to escape us.

As we ground to a stop a little beyond them, I started to fire my rifle from the hip. I didn't hit any of them, but I saw dust fly up about their feet as they dived into the bush. By that time Darrah had come up with his machine gun, and he swept the bush on both sides of the track and kept the bandits so far back in it that they could not fire effectively on us while we were replacing the rail. There was only one rail missing, as luck would have it, and instead of carrying this rail out to the middle of the bridge and tumbling it off into the river, which would have sunk us, they had just rolled it down to the bottom of the thirty-five foot embankment.

I stood up on the motor car with my rifle, and sent four men down to get that rail. The only results they seemed to achieve consisted of grunts as they tugged vainly at the heavy steel. They couldn't budge it. And then one of the bandits up in the woods got a shot near them, and the bullet kicked up the dirt right where they were standing. I tell you they not only picked up that heavy rail right now, but literally waltzed up the slope of that embankment with it. I was laughing at them, with the sweat running down my nose, but that was from the excitement, and not from the heat.

We had no spikes, so we just butted the rail into place, figuring it was heavy enough to hold our motor cars; but of course it would never have held our train, so you can figure what would have happened if the bandits had destroyed those two motor cars at Moss Farm, just as they did everywhere else. They would have had no organized military force or machine guns to stop them from going to Puerto Cabezas, because we would have been bottled up, and no mistake.

While we were replacing the rail, the airplanes came back. We knew they'd be having food and ammunition for us, but we didn't have time to lay out signals; we just waved our arms in the direction of Wakiwas—we'd figured we would make our headquarters there because the place was easy to fortify—and kept on working.

The loose rail carried our weight all right; and the bridge is so long that by the time we got to the other end, where we had to replace another missing rail, we were practically out of the zone of bandit fire. We were through. And by five o'clock we were in Wakiwas, where we were met by Sergeant Taylor and eleven more Guardia with another machine gun. So we had three quick-firers to fortify Wakiwas and we lost no time

doing it, for we had seen behind us the smoke and flames at Moss Farm, which the bandits were burning, along with the wooden trestle bridge over the gully by the water tank.

We were also met at Wakiwas by Mr. Strickland, the company's agricultural superintendent, who had come out in a motor car; and we later sent our wounded men back to Puerto Cabezas with him. In addition, we were able to telephone to the Port—our first communication with them since our departure the day before. The main thing we wanted to tell them, of course, was to send us food and ammunition. They said they had sent us up both by plane, but the two fliers had reported when they came back that we had waved them off.

They had evidently misunderstood us when we were pointing in the direction of Wakiwas while we were breaking our way through at the bridge. However, the folks at the Port gave us authority to break into the commissary at Wakiwas, and Mr. Strickland did it before he left; so at good length, after thirty-eight hours, we got something to eat. There was a generous ration of rice and corned beef for the men, while we officers got goldfish and a can of peaches each, not to mention plenty of bread and coffee all around. And by the grace of God there was ice at Wakiwas—and beer—so we had iced beer with our supper that night.

We were also informed by phone, in the Guardia code, so that the news should not leak out again to Blandon through sympathizers who might be listening in, that Captain John Woods and reenforcements would reach us at Wakiwas by daybreak. That was mighty good news, considering the report that five hundred more bandits were heading our way. All of us stayed awake that night, for it was our job to stop those five hundred men somehow, if they tried to come through.

In the morning at 6:30, Captain Woods, Lieutenant Simmer and four men arrived in quite a train. First there was a banana car, in the front end of which we set up a machine gun, knocking out some of the end boards for a loophole and protecting the gun itself with sandbags, for naturally the thin planking of the car wouldn't have stopped a bullet. Then there was a flat car, fortified with sandbags, and last of all the engine.

Captain Woods asked whether we wanted to have breakfast first, and some of the Guardia, who were all pepped up by that time, said they didn't want to eat—they wanted to fight. But two planes had been detailed to operate in conjunction with us, and we had to wait for them in any event; so we held up the start and cooked breakfast, leaving when we got the phone signal from the Port that the planes were ready.

We got as far as Snaki Bridge, where the loose rail was, and beyond it we could see the wooden Moss Farm trestle still burning. Knowing we would have to abandon our train there in any event, we didn't waste time repairing the track for just an additional five hundred yards, but dismounted the machine guns and proceeded on foot, putting out two points—one on each side of the track.

At the first farm we passed we met Austin Murphy, who told us Blandon and his men had gone back to Logtown; in fact, that they had passed that way only a few hours earlier, at five o'clock. By that time one of the two planes, which had been buzzing over Logtown, came back to us and made a drop to let us know the bandits were there and were trying to take cover at the approach of the planes. He also wrote that their gasoline supply was getting low and added, "Suggest you make all possible speed."

I remember those words particularly, because we said a few hasty things when we read them. We had been hiking along in the sun with heavy loads, and naturally it burned us up some that this chap, who had been riding up there as cool and comfortable as you please should suggest we make "all possible speed". However,

we did it; we speeded up the hiking pace, loaded as the men were, and when you consider what those Guardia boys had been through, and how little rest and food they had had, it was wonderful the way they responded.

OF COURSE the plane itself helped us make speed because it acted as our advance guard, clearing the track ahead of us so that we did not have to keep points out to guard against ambush. The plane would circle around behind us, dive down and skim over us and up along the track ahead of us, and then rise and repeat the maneuver, while the other plane remained over Logtown, peppering the bandits there with machine guns, and making it too hot for them to leave shelter. They didn't drop any bombs, though, because they didn't want the bandits to scatter. They wanted to concentrate them there for us.

We reached Logtown by 11:30, halted for a breather, formed into three detachments and charged in. You have to give the Guardia credit. After what they had been through, those native boys still had enough reserve energy from God only knows where—right on top of that killing hike in the sun, mind—to go into Logtown at the double.

The place is just a clearing in the jungle—a sort of shallow basin. Left and right from the railroad track the ground slopes up to the bush. Captain Woods with his detachment and machine gun turned to the right as we entered the settlement, charged up the incline, setting up the machine gun to command the jungle on the right. What is more, he wasn't fired upon until he had set up his gun; and neither was Clyde Darrah, with his men, who went straight along the railroad track and set up their gun to command the jungle on the left, which came down the slope to a point much nearer the town on that side.

But by the time Captain Woods had his gun set up, he made a contact right enough. The bandits opened fire on him from the bush, and he talked back with his machine gun and finally silenced them.

While this was going on, an old negro came out of one of the shacks and we called him and asked him where the bandits were. He said they were all around us, and I told him to get back to his shack, where he would be safe; but instead of doing so, he started to run back along the track in the direction from which he had just come. He hadn't got twenty steps away from us when the bandits in the bush at the left killed him. Why they fired at him instead of at Darrah and me I don't know, unless it was because they thought he had given us information.

Darrah then began to sweep the bush on that side with his machine guns. A native who passed through that section of the jungle two days later told us he counted eighteen bodies there. Anyway, Darrah and his men silenced the fire on the left, and so Lieutenant Simmer and I, with our men, went to the shacks of the town and began to search them.

I was off by myself when I saw a man crawl out from beneath a house. He had a much better looking uniform on than any of the others I had seen. It was queer, in one way; the shack under which he had been hiding was so low to the ground, I don't think we would ever have searched beneath it, because it simply wouldn't have occurred to us any one would try to hide in so small a space. The man who crawled out started to run when he saw me, and I fired from the hip. I saw him flinch at the shock of the bullet, but he kept on running, so I fired again, and he flinched that time, too.

But still he kept staggering away, so I dropped to one knee, took careful aim, and fired at him three times. He was hit each time, and went down with the last bullet; but still he tried to crawl away on all fours, with his sword dragging along the ground behind him. Lieutenant Simmer, Lieutenant Darrah and a number of the Guardia who had been

called to the scene by hearing the shots, and who had come up behind me while I was too busy to notice, opened fire promiscuously and let him have a volley. I think he was hit, all told, eighteen times, but it is a remarkable thing that he did not die. He was still alive when we prepared to leave town two hours later. And as an act of mercy we ordered one of the Guardia to dispatch him with a rifle bullet through the head before we left, for he was beyond hope of recovery.

This man turned out to be Pedro Blandon, Sandino's chief aide. He was first identified for us by some of the natives who came stealing back out of the bush after the battle. Among the papers in his pocket was his commission, signed by Cesar Augusto Sandino himself. There were also two Sandino letters, one of which commended Blandon as newly commissioned Sandino commander for the Eastern District of Nicaragua. Blandon was further identified, later in the day, by men who had known him for years.

As general in command of the entire Sandino operations against the Puerta Cabezas region, his death demoralized what was left of the bandits. They retreated singly through the jungle. Under the house from which Blandon had crawled out, I later caught just a stir of movement and I fired under it twice. I could not stop to investigate, at the moment, but later, as Lieutenant Simmer was passing the place, some one fired on him from beneath it. He dropped to his knee and fired his pistol at the narrow space under the building by way of return. Then he rushed the place and dragged out the body of the man he had shot. He was also an officer of the bandits. Then, looking under the house, he found the body of another man, evidently killed by my two shots before.

The machine guns were still going, and the planes were dropping bombs in the jungle, wherever they noticed signs of bandit activity. But the bandit fire soon stopped altogether, and the amphibians wheeled and left for Puerta Cabezas. There were eight bandits dead in Logtown itself, and no one could tell how many more in the bush. Our only casualty was one man who got a skin scratch on the abdomen.

Setting an easy pace, we walked back to Snaki Bridge, boarded our train and rode to Wakiwas, where we were in telephone communication with the Port once more. We learned here that bandits were still reported in operation along the farms on both sides of the track between us and Puerto Cabezas.

So we kept on past Wakiwas, but were halted by a native boy on a motor car, who told us a bandit ambush had been prepared for our coming at a gravel cut overlooking the railroad track thirteen kilometers out from the Port. We were at Wawa Boom—another bridge—when we got this message, and telephoned the Port from there. Lieutenant Benson, at the Port, urged us to bring the Guardia back as soon as possible, as the Port was reported to be surrounded by bandits and the inhabitants were in a panic.

WE CAMPED at Wawa Boom that night, with our locomotive headlight turned on the bridge and sentries posted at each end. Also we broke into the commissary to get provisions. It seems we were always worrying about something to eat.

We made coffee with the locomotive by using steam from the outlet pipe and the injector, and ground coffee in a big iron pot. We had a tin of sugar, too, and some empty tins from our supper rations for coffee cups through the night. Unfortunately, one of the Guardia, by mistake, poured his coffee into the tin in which we had our whole supply of sugar, so the rest of us had to drink unsweetened coffee the balance of the night. There were some feeling comments on that score, for it was too cold to sleep much, and we improved the time by thinking up things to say.

The next morning, as we were preparing to start, a plane came over and made a drop informing us that a bridge between us and the Port had been fired, and that we were cut off. By great good luck one of the company's tugboats, the *North Star,* was tied up at the boom in the Wawa River. The magneto was out of commission on her engine, but I raided the commissary and the buildings for batteries from the telephones, and we ran her on batteries and so got back to Puerto Cabezas by way of the Wawa River, though we had some trouble crossing the bar.

The bandit attacks on the town never materialized, and the combat patrols that went out later reported the bandits gone from the vicinity. Nevertheless, we kept hearing reports of a band that was still in camp somewhere beyond Logtown. So Captain Orville Inman of the Marines, who had taken over command of the Port, and Lieutenant Darrah and twenty-five men went out to make a thorough patrol as far up as the Wanks. They took me along as assistant to the officers again. We were well equipped, this time. We had blankets and machine guns and sub-machine guns and rations—only they forgot the meat, and so we were faced with the discouraging prospect of living on rice and beans for the entire time.

However, the following day when we got to Lecus, some ten miles beyond Logtown, an old native came to us complaining that the bandits had just run off with his livestock.

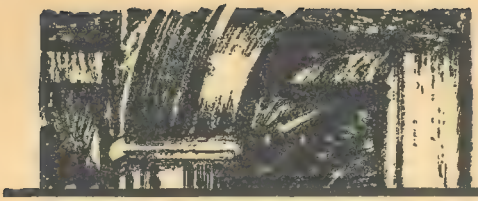
It developed that this livestock consisted of one pig, and that the bandits had thrashed him unmercifully when he protested against its confiscation. He offered to lead us to where the bandits were when in camp. We found twenty-five or thirty in the group. They were barbecuing the pig they had run off, and those who were not cooking were having a swim in the river. We opened up on them and killed seven that we know of—four in the river and three in the bush, and we found blood here and there in the bush to indicate that we must have wounded several more. However, our meat shortage was very satisfactorily relieved, for we had barbecued pig with our rice that night.

That was the last time we made contact with the enemy, though we pushed on until we struck the Wanks River and went down it by boat to Cape Gracias a Dios, which had been raided by bandits the week before. The U.S.S. *Asheville* was stationed at Gracias. We had struck the river at Sacklin, and our boat was powered by conscript Indian paddlers and three bandit prisoners.

Thus we got our only bad scare at Cape Gracias—and from Americans at that. Natives, who had seen our nondescript craft and crew upstream, sent runners down the coast to say that bandits were on the way to raid Cape Gracias a Dios again—meaning us. The *Asheville* promptly sent a landing party ashore in a gig mounting a quick-firer in the bow, and since we came to the mouth of the river after nightfall, there's no telling what might have happened if a man by the name of Boise hadn't heard us talking and realized that we were speaking English. He came down to the bank at once to warn us that the *Asheville* had a landing party ashore to meet us.

Captain Inman immediately took his flashlight and frantically signaled *"Asheville—Asheville—Asheville"* in blinker dots and dashes, and finally in that way managed to get word to them that we were the Guardia detachment.

We returned to Puerto Cabezas the following day, our patrol having demonstrated pretty conclusively that the bandits had retired from the district and were apparently disorganized. Clyde Darrah has been deservedly recommended for the Navy Cross. Work has been resumed on all the farmsteads along the line. But the American foremen and timekeepers come in to a central headquarters every night, and remain there with a Guardia patrol to keep watch. This is the last echo of the activities of the late Pedro Blandon.



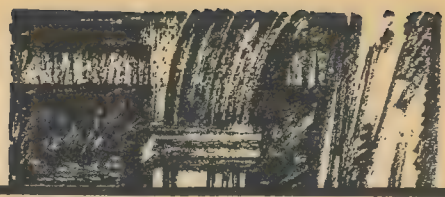
GLENALLAN *of the* CLANS

By DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

THE messenger with word that Charles Edward Stuart had returned from France to Scotland to lead the clans against the German George II, usurper of his rightful throne, found young Malcolm of Glenallan in London, eager to be off to his wild hills. So eager that, when news of the Stuart's return was whispered to him in the gambling rooms at Martin's, his manner became preoccupied to the point of offending his opponent in play, the arrogant Captain Fitzstephen of the Dragoons. Fitzstephen insulted Malcolm, who struck him. The Englishman demanded satisfaction and a duel was arranged to take place the next morning. But Malcolm, pressed for time, could not wait—and he left the gambling house branded a coward.

On the way to his rooms he was attacked by highwaymen; but, with the aid of the escort of beautiful Lady Helen Hornsby, fortunately passing at the time, he succeeded in driving them off. He then told Lady Helen that he was leaving London immediately, and tried to dissuade her when she replied that she herself would soon be visiting in Edinburgh—fearing for her safety in the civil war about to break.

Malcolm reached his ancestral home, Allan's Castle, to find his father, the Laird of Glenallan, dying. And shortly after that, Malcolm, as chief of his clan,



A Novel of the Jacobite Wars

marched forth to keep the rendezvous with the Stuart, leaving his young brother, Fergus, behind.

The clans rallied and marched upon Edinburgh, which fell to the wild Scotsmen without a shot being fired. And Malcolm lost no time in calling upon Lady Helen at the house of her relatives. She received him cordially, and thereafter he became a constant visitor in her house. And the day Prince Charles led the clans forth to do battle with the English, Malcolm and Lady Helen were married . . .

Malcolm marched immediately with his clan, and in the bitter, bloody battles with the English that followed, success attended upon the Scotsmen; nevertheless recruits were slow to join up and deserters were numerous. And finally the clan leaders met to persuade Prince Charlie against trying to march upon London. Protesting bitterly in his blind optimism, the Prince finally agreed to withdraw into Scotland. And his retreat promised success until his ragged clansmen made contact with the splendid army of the English General Hawley.

Malcolm was in the thick of the fighting when the decimated clans were charged by the English Dragoons. In the fury of the combat one officer, whose mount seemed to be out of control, continued headlong through the very ranks

of the Highlanders. Fighting wildly, the Englishman was finally pulled from his horse and led before Malcolm—who looked into the sneering face of the man who had challenged him to fight in London—Captain Fitzstephen.

"You are my prisoner, sir," said the Glenallan gravely.

"Hello!" said Fitzstephen. "My old gambling friend!"

CHAPTER XV

PISTOLS AT DAWN

MALCOLM was no less astonished than Captain Fitzstephen. They stared at each other, speechless for a full minute, while Old Angus piped loudly and yelling men ran here and there. They did not move. Long, thin wisps of smoke floated between their faces, and there was a distant rattle of musketry on the right and occasionally a great explosion near them. Evan of Lochallan, instantly aware of something unusual about this meeting, watched the two men quietly and with care. The captain was the first to speak. He straightened his coat with two down jerks.

"How fortunate that I should fall into the hands of one who loves me so dearly."

Malcolm turned to Looney.

"Tie his hands and take him back to town. I make you responsible for him."

"I suppose you will hang me?" Fitzstephen asked.

Malcolm shook his head.

"If I'm killed, you become a prisoner of war, and Prince Charles may do as he pleases with you. But I promise he will not kill you. He's not a damned Englishman!"

Fitzstephen would have made some sarcastic retort, but he was not given the opportunity. The dutiful Looney led him away; and the Glenallan clan remained in its position in the front line, waiting for the order to advance.

But the battle of Falkirk, so far as the Glenallans were concerned, was no more than a skirmish. By the time they had been commanded to charge, the enemy had retreated beyond reach. Some of the Englishmen, it is true, were found in the town, and these were cut down without mercy. Others, Dragoons, had galloped the whole length of the Highland line in their panic and had been decimated by a running fire. Still other Dragoons had retreated wildly among the foot soldiers, trampling many of these under hoof and throwing them all into the wildest confusion. The Saxon cannon had been mired at the foot of Maggie Wood's Lane.

If the Highlanders had charged promptly, Hawley would have had no troops to lead in retreat. As it was, only the right wing advanced. There was no holding back the Macdonalds; they were too hot for battle to be restrained by mere military commands. They fought like demons and almost succeeded in cutting off the enemy's escape. Hawley's camp was captured, together with all his baggage and his military chest. And Hawley himself, spectacularly baffled, fell back to the safety of Edinburgh—where there were six stout gallows to mock him in his misery.

As for Malcolm, he was well satisfied that the conflict had been so brief. Revenge upon Captain Fitzstephen occupied his mind entirely. He was more than usually taciturn; and every delay in reassembling the men stirred him to harsh impatience. But he got permission to quit the field early and returned to Stirling.

The captain's horse, tied to a hitching post, was the first thing that he observed when he turned into the street in which Mr. Montcrief's house stood. Fitzstephen, wrists tied, was seated in a corner of Malcolm's bedroom, the English pistol that the halfwit held still pointed at his breast. Outside in the hallway were Mr. Montcrief and his good wife, alarmed but at the same time very inquisitive. Looney would not permit

them to enter and question him.

The laird was attended only by Evan of Lochallan, to whom he had explained everything. He gazed thoughtfully upon his captive.

Fitzstephen demanded petulantly—

"How long are you going to keep me like this?"

"It's too dark to fight now."

"Ah!" The captain looked up with more interest. "You are still bent on a rencontre?"

"Aye."

Fitzstephen shrugged, smiled, made a mock bow and indicated by his expression that such a meeting would not be unwelcome. But he asked again if he were to be kept tied, remarking that this position would cramp his muscles and probably prevent him from being in proper condition when he went to the field of honor.

"That is fair," said Malcolm; and he commanded Looney to untie the prisoner, at the same time instructing the halfwit to remain on watch. To Fitzstephen he said in English, "You preferred small swords, but there is none here. At least, there is none we can borrow without raising suspicion, and dueling has been strictly forbidden by the Prince. We must make other arrangements."

"A walking armory like you should not be at a loss. Those pistols—"

MALCOLM unhooked the pistols from his belt, knocked the powder and ball from them and laid them on the table. But he shook his head. They were good dags, very long, made of iron and steel, with unguarded ball triggers, and screw barrels. But they would hardly do for dueling. They were not equipped with sights; and they were not perfectly mated.

If the captain desired them, all right. But Malcolm knew that his cousin, who would act as his representative, possessed the best dueling pistols in all Scotland, a pair of rifled Williamesons. These would be sent to the captain for his inspection.

"You're very kind. It might interest you to know," said Fitzstephen, always the play-actor, "that I am considered one of the best shots in his Majesty's service."

Malcolm said nothing to this. He hooked the pistols on his belt and prepared to depart.

"Daybreak will be a good time?"

"Any time will be a good time to kill you, Jocky."

"I shall see that you have seconds. I shall make the other arrangements."

Fitzstephen shrugged and turned away. In spite of himself, Malcolm could not help admiring the man's courage. He bowed stiffly, glanced again at Looney and started out of the room.

"Must I be entertained by this moonface all night?" Fitzstephen asked.

"You must," said Malcolm.

"Won't you take my parole?"

"No."

Fitzstephen was exasperated.

"Have you no respect at all for my word of honor as a gentleman?"

"None at all," said Malcolm, and quit the room.

Young Lochiel, when he returned from the field, consented to the use of his Williamesons and consented also to act as a second. Malcolm conferred lengthily with him, in Donald's room just across the street. It was decided that the Cameron and Bobby MacUalrig would act for Fitzstephen, as a formality, and that Lochallan and Evan Macgregor, a major now, would act for Malcolm. The affair was to be kept a secret until it was finished, for fear the Prince would object.

MacUalrig produced the weapons, in a rosewood box, and Malcolm handled them lovingly. He would have given half his property for them, but he knew that nothing could induce Donald to sell them. They were exactly alike—flat plated, flat cocked, with silver ramrods, real Damascus twist barrels, and handles of close grained Circassian wal-

nut inlaid with silver wire scrolls. Their balance was perfect and their sights were the finest ever made. They were sent to Captain Fitzstephen, who kept them for nearly an hour, returning them at last, by Bobby MacUalrig, with the message that they were in every way satisfactory.

Fitzstephen was to occupy Malcolm's room for the night, while the young laird slept with his cousin.

In the darkness, Donald talked about the battle, the magnificent bravery of the Macdonalds and the hard feeling among the chieftains because they were not called to council more frequently. He had never been so loquacious, even in Malcolm's presence. But he said not a word about the coming duel. He was not happy about the business—this Malcolm knew. He had offered not a word of objection, knowing Malcolm too well to suppose that objections would be heeded. But nevertheless he didn't like the business. At best, it would mean many apologies and explanations in the Prince's presence, and possibly disgrace for all of them, for Charles had been in ugly humor since Derby and was not likely to excuse the settlement of personal differences at a time like this. At worst, it would mean Callum MacIldowie's death. But young Lochiel said not a word about it as they lay side by side in the darkness.

"Ye've not heard from your wife at all, Callum?"

"Nay."

"Are ye not worried?"

"Aye."

The frenzy for revenge that had fired him during the afternoon was comparatively quiet now; and the risk of death was becoming commonplace these days. But he *was* worried about Helen. And he realized that the worry was foolish. She could not get a letter to him; Edinburgh was in the hands of the German's men, to whom the followers of the Prince were that many outlaws. His common sense and his acquaintance with military matters ought to have reassured him. Nevertheless, it was a strange business, being married to a woman, such a beautiful woman, and hurrying away and not seeing her or hearing from her for months.

The thought came to him that he might never see Helen again; and the thought made him panicky. He felt a fear stronger, more definite, infinitely more terrible, than the fear that had passed over him just before the charge at Prestonpans.

He shouldn't worry like this—he needed sleep . . .

He decided to pray. It was not often that he prayed. After some especially remarkable exhibition of the Creator's might, he believed, a prayer was decent and acceptable to heaven. But it was only under extraordinary circumstances that Malcolm asked for help in trouble; for that, he believed, argued lack of confidence and of faith. He had his own ideas about faith.

He moved his lips in the darkness, saying the words in his mind but not aloud, for fear of waking Donald . . .

It was still dark when one of Donald's gillies awakened them. The Cameron dressed quickly and took his customary morning—two fingers of brandy. Malcolm's morning was three fingers. Neither ate any food; it was well that Malcolm should go to the meeting with an empty stomach. Bobby MacUalrig, always to be found somewhere near his chief, was quartered in the same house; and he joined them quietly, the pistol case under his arm. They were to meet Macgregor and Lochallan on the field.

There was no conversation. Donald of Lochiel, faced with the prospect of witnessing the death of the man to whom, after his father, he gave the greatest love, had need of all the courage that was in him.

The faithful MacUalrig admired Malcolm as a warrior, and respected him as a descendant of Domhnull Dhu and of Aonghas; but MacUalrig was most concerned over the trouble in which his

chief was likely to find himself. The Prince would not like this business. He would complain that it would give the Englishmen a framework upon which to weave another monstrous lie about the mistreatment of prisoners by the rebels. He would be angry with Young Lochiel.

There was the Glenallan clan to consider, too. If Callum and not the Englishman were killed, the Glenallans might be willing to follow a representative of the house of Lochiel or the house of Letterfinlay; but certainly none of them would do so until Fitzstephen himself had been put to death. For the Glenallans—as Bobby MacUalrig knew well—were fighting not so much for the glory of the Stuart as for the glory of their own leader, their beloved Macdomhnull Dhu. And so Bobby shook his head about the business and was silent.

Malcolm himself gave no indication that the matter troubled him. But then, it was always difficult to tell what Malcolm's feelings might be—difficult even for Donald, who knew him, perhaps, as well as any man. The young laird was clear eyed and expressionless. He seemed to have slept well.

They had their first premonition of trouble when they descended into the bleak, gray street, still dark. Captain Fitzstephen's horse, a blooded beast, beautifully built, was not tied to the hitching post at the side of Mr. Montcrief's house. Malcolm remarked it instantly.

"Ye ken, Donald, I commanded that the animal stay there all night."

"Aye."

Mr. Montcrief admitted them quietly. He knew of nothing wrong, he said; there had not been a sound from Fitzstephen's bedroom all night—though Mr. Montcrief could not really vouch for the time, perhaps two hours, during which he had dozed. The horse? Somebody must have stolen the horse. It had been reckless, anyway, to leave so expensive an animal practically in the street all night.

But Malcolm and his cousin were convinced that there had been trouble. They hurried up the staircase, side by side, three steps at a time, with big Bobby MacUalrig following, and so into Malcolm's room.

Looney was seated where they had left him, but he was doubled over, his face upon his knees, his hands, palms up, just touching the floor. He was naked except for an undershirt. Blood that had dried was on his lower legs and on the floor between his feet.

They straightened him in the chair. His throat had been cut from ear to ear—evidently with his own dirk, which lay on the floor nearby, covered with blood. The pistol was gone. A note lay on the table.

> You must not think I was afraid. When the simpleton dozed, I only did what any sensible man would do. You will find an excellent Dragoon captain's uniform in the corner. It is yours; permit me to recommend it in place of these damned skirts.
>
> —FITZS

CHAPTER XVI

ONE LAST CHANCE

IT WAS on the last day of January that the Duke of Cumberland, at the head of ten thousand men, quit Edinburgh to disperse the rebels.

The soldiers called him Bluff Bill. He was a young man—just Charles Edward's age, twenty-four. And like Charles Edward, he had plenty of natural courage. But where comparison was inevitable, there was no other point of resemblance. His royal Highness of Cumberland was thick faced, thick necked, stolid. He was a soldier of the new school, raised in the military traditions of the Germans, with no respect for human kindness and no patience with wornout notions of chivalry. He believed in punishment that was untempered by soft emotion; thorough punishment—shooting, flogging, hanging.

From the drawing room of Robert Forbes' house, Lady Helen Hornsby, who was Lady Glenallan now, watched him pass. She saw him raise a gloved hand to his blue bonnet, smiling to right and left. Was it a smile? Rather a grin, Helen thought. It seemed to say to the crowds, "You do damned well to cheer me! The side of the hangman is the side a wise man should favor." So he went out of the city. And Lady Helen, like every other person in Edinburgh, was remembering the time when Bonnie Prince Charlie had gone forth at the head of his men, and the way Bonnie Prince Charlie had smiled . . .

She was heavy hearted. She knew that there was good foundation for Cumberland's confidence. The clans were pushed almost as far as they could go; they would be cornered, without supplies, without hope of supplies, and terribly outnumbered. Some Jacobites still insisted that nothing was impossible to a man so brave and so ingenious as the Stuart; but Lady Helen, for all her devotion to her husband's cause, knew that the end was near. She could feel it. As before a storm the air is still, the grass lies flat, the birds and animals disappear silently, so before the final battle all Edinburgh trembled in hushed expectancy.

There was more news now. Reports were coming in every day. Lady Helen had heard how the clans had marched down into England; how they had dodged two superior armies; how, at Derby, with every hope apparently killed for them, they had turned back, evaded the same two armies a second time, and reached Scotland. She had heard, like everybody else, of the battle of Falkirk, where again the clansmen had defied all rules of modern warfare and sent Hawley's men scurrying for the shelter of Edinburgh. And she had watched Hawley's return to the city, swathed in a black silence; and for a little time there had been wild hope in her breast. But then Cumberland had come north with crushing reenforcements. Cumberland represented, at last, the full strength of the established government.

Lady Helen had met the young man many times at court. He was the King's second son, and she hated him. He was rude, brutal, ugly. But it was said that he was a great soldier; and she sighed as she watched him go.

She was lonesome now. Since Charles Edward had gone there was no activity at Holyroodhouse. Cumberland had entertained once, because it had seemed expedient; but Lady Helen had refused an invitation to the dull affair. Her friends were cool. Gerald was alternately cold and loud with abuse. Robert Forbes, always the polite host, was embarrassed: the viscount was angry about the marriage, and the viscount was Robert Forbes' friend and benefactor. Lady Helen was a stranger among her own people. Already she belonged in those hills she had never seen.

But she continued to stay at the house in the Cannongate. There was nothing else to do—except return to London, and this she refused to consider.

"He'll be killed," Gerald told her many times. "Either he'll be killed in the big fight coming or he'll be caught and hanged."

Nevertheless, she stayed in Edinburgh and continued to hope. Prince Charles, she feared, was doomed. But the redcoats would have no easy time taking Malcolm's life. Malcolm was tough and quick and strong. The confidence she had in him was all that was left to Lady Helen. She sat, many hours of the day, in the windowseat where they had talked in the past. She could close her eyes and see him stride up and down the room, frowning because the words that he wanted would not come to him, impatient and angry as though the words were tardy servants; she could see him, all steel and silver and plaid, standing in front of the huge fireplace, a fitting foreground for the panoply of weapons there; she could see him beside her in the windowseat, staring at her as a man might stare at a vision from Heaven.

The Winter snows began to disappear. The Spring rains washed the white from the hills as though it had been so much chalk. The streams of Scotland abruptly became obstreperous and very busy; where there had been rivulets, rivers appeared, and the ground that had been frozen hard as rock became soft with mud and slush. There were no supplies for the Highlanders, who were starving around Inverness. Lord George Murray was called back from the Athole country. Lochiel was called in from the siege of Fort Augustus. And messengers were sent to scour the hills for the foraging parties that were active everywhere.

On the fourteenth of April a gillie brought news that Cumberland had crossed the Spey and was advancing rapidly. Prince Charles, on the following day, rallied his men—such of them as could be found—and marched them out on Drummossie Moor. To the right was the river Nairn, to the left Culloden House and the sea; and behind them were the Highlands, glaring black. They might retreat farther and scatter among the hills, to be hunted like little animals that are hunted by resistless hounds. Or they might stand their ground like men and be slaughtered.

No, there was one other chance, one last chance. Lord George Murray proposed it.

"Nothing but a miracle will save us if we remain here, and your Highness is aware that to depend upon miracles is poor military policy."

"I will not retreat again. Let the world say I'm a fool. It can never say I am a coward!"

Lord George bowed.

"I was thinking, sir, of your royal father. We are in the field to restore him to his rightful throne. Nothing done toward that end could be called the act of a coward."

"Retreat would not help my father."

"I believe that to be true, sir. But there is another course. It is a desperate chance, but it is better than waiting for that miracle. Cumberland's men are eighteen miles away, as your Highness knows. They will start their march in the morning — not early, for they marched hard today. Tonight they will sleep well. For another army, eighteen miles on a night like this would not be possible. But your Highness's men have done it before, and they could do it again. May I submit—the last thing anybody would expect of us—a night attack?"

THERE was a high wind, and it was bitter cold. The van encountered frozen water and mud, and left sharp, broken chunks of ice floating on the surfaces of deep, slippery puddles, to cut the brogues and the feet of those who followed. For twenty-four hours they had eaten no food, and they were so tired that they could scarcely swing their legs. Man after man fell by the way. Some of them froze to death; some starved to death; some of them made pitiful efforts to drag themselves along after the army.

The Glenallan relayed to his men, as they walked, the instructions he had received at council.

"You're to be silent till I give the command to charge. Then use your claymores—no pistols or muskets. Rush down among the tents, and wherever you see a hump, stick it. Yell all the time. And Angus, I want you to blow up as you've never blown before."

Lochallan's gillie fell. His bare feet were frozen. David MacMichael lifted the man on his own mighty shoulders, and carried him.

But by the time the Saxon camp was sighted, dawn had come. The main part of the army had still to appear; some of the companies were several miles back; and Lord George Murray shook his head. It were as sensible to have all the men throw themselves into the sea as to have them attack now. The chance had gone. The best they could do was return to their original position and wait for their fate. He gave the command to retreat.

Through the sticky mud, in the light of a sickly dawn, they straggled back, tight lipped, suffering. Where one man had fallen previously, three fell now. The icy wind brought death as surely as though it had been a shower of bullets. There was no longer any attempt to carry the frozen men. Great Davie's burden became cold on Davie's back.

"The mon's dead, ye daftie!"

So Lochallan's gillie was dropped by the roadside, and the Glenallans staggered on, cursing sometimes, and sometimes praying, but most of the time grimly silent. And Malcolm walked at the head of them, with Evan on his right side and Walter MacPhail on his left.

CHAPTER XVII

BLACK CULLODEN DAY

THE duke's men came on, colors flying, bayonets gleaming, drums a-thunder, white gaiters swinging regularly as the men marched—a grand mass of steel and scarlet, moving with the precision of a machine. About a mile away they began to form their lines.

"I don't like it, Callum," said Donald of Lochiel. "They're on higher ground, and the wind's at our faces. When the firing starts we'll be blind for the smoke."

"Aye," said Malcolm.

There was still more moving to be done. The Glenallans were shifted and shifted, without any apparent reason; they dragged themselves back and forth, obedient, leaden legged; and in the end they found themselves just where they had been in the morning. But at least the motion served to keep the men awake.

On the tip of the right wing were the warriors from Athole. The Glenallans were placed next to them, the Camerons next, and beyond the Camerons were the Stewarts of Appine, the Frazers, the MacIntoshes, the Farquharsons, the Chisholms, the Duke of Perth's men, Roy Stewart's men and the Macdonalds. Why the Macdonalds were on the left wing was a mystery. Since Bannockburn their place had always been on the right; that position was theirs by all tradition. They were angry at the change and they showed it.

The sun had been out earlier, but now black clouds were spreading rapidly; the wind stiffened and was wet and sharp and very cold; soon the rain began to fall.

In all the clans, and in the second line, the gentlemen, with drawn swords, harangued the warriors, or they passed in and out between the ranks shouting encouragement.

"Scrug your bonnets, laddies! We'll read the riot act to them this time!"

Only the expectation of a charge kept the men on their feet. And even with this, there were many who could not stand, so worn were they and so hungry; they lay on their backs, moaning, begging for food.

Messengers hurried here and there, sometimes rising high in their saddles, with knees suddenly stiffened, the better to glimpse the scarlet host across the moor.

Sullivan and his gillies rode back and forth behind the front line, and he watched anxiously, conferring sometimes with messengers, muttering sometimes to himself.

"A half pint of whisky for each man, and a single bannock apiece, and we'd be sure of it," Sullivan told Young Lochiel.

"You could leave out the bannock," said Donald. "The laddies are near kilt with the cold."

Once the Prince went by, on a beautiful black Spanish jennet. He waved cheerfully at Lochiel and at Malcolm and smiled encouragement. The chances were a thousand to one against him, but he was as gay and as smart as ever he had been at Holyroodhouse while leading a lady through the minuet. Tall white feathers nodded on his bonnet; he wore the white plaid of the royal Stuarts, and a white camlet coat em-

broidered with silver lace; and on his breast gleamed the Star of St. Andrew.

"They're comin' ag'in," Gillie Angus remarked.

The Duke's men moved still farther forward, until they were almost within gunshot. The Highlanders, excited at first, were dismayed when they saw the halt. Why was there no command to charge? Did Charlie think that they could stand forever and watch those banners wave and listen to the beating of those damned drums?

Down near the center two pipers blew up bravely, and some few men were singing. But this soon died. There was a long pause—a heavy, horrible silence.

Then the cannon near the center exploded with a roar; smoke suddenly blotted the enemy from sight. Almost immediately the Saxon cannon, which were much more numerous, opened return fire. The smoke was redoubled. The noise was terrific. Some of the men threw themselves upon the ground, covering their heads with their arms in an effort to protect their ears; but the gentlemen were among them always, cursing, threatening, pleading.

The rain came down with increasing sharpness. The drops, which were very large, struck like small pellets of lead.

Still there was no command to advance. The Glenallan men, though better behaved, were as restless as the Camerons and the Atholemen, and as anxious to charge.

"Must we stand here and be blown up by machines?" their eyes seemed to say to Malcolm.

The laird himself flipped up bits of turf with the point of his broadsword, and he frowned upon the ground, swearing softly.

Sullivan was shaking his shoulder and shouting in his ear.

"There may be a rumor his Highness was killed—deny it!"

Malcolm grabbed the reins, for Sullivan would have ridden away.

"It's a lie, man? For the sake of God, it's a lie!"

"Yes, yes! Let my horse go! He's safe. Deny it! A ball splashed him with mud and—"

Malcolm didn't hear the rest. Sullivan was away to give the message to the gentlemen from Athole. The Glenallan clansmen looked a question at their chief, but he shook his head impatiently to indicate that the matter was none of their business.

IT SEEMED as though the firing continued for hours. Because of the smoke it was impossible to see the sky. Most of the men thought that night had come. They fingered the triggers of their muskets, and a few of them fired from bravado; they loosened their claymores; they pulled their bonnets far down over their foreheads.

A cannon ball screamed through the ranks not ten feet from the chief. Somebody shrieked. Malcolm felt his way around, as a man might do in the densest fog, and discovered that Walter MacPhail was dead, ripped to pieces, and Paul MacMichael was hopping foolishly about, holding cupped hands over a nasty red blotch on his right leg.

Evan of Lochallan grabbed Malcolm's arm and pointed toward the Camerons. The Camerons, giving their war cry, were rushing into the thickest smoke. Malcolm could not hear them, but he could see their mouths move, and their faces were twisted by hate. There had been no order to charge; but Malcolm could not watch his cousins dash into the enemy and leave him behind. He raised his sword.

"Claymores! Claymores!"

"Glenallan!" the men yelled.

Muskets were crashing on the left now, where the Camerons were, but there was no sound of firing on the right of Malcolm. He bent far down, holding his target over his head and running with all the speed in his legs . . . He came through the smoke abruptly and met the Englishmen.

They were three deep. Malcolm sent

one of them to the ground with a blow that almost took the man's arm off at the shoulder. He lifted aside a bayonet and thrust at a bright red coat—but even as he did so he slipped on the wet ground and was kicked in the face.

He rose without an instant's pause, and was cutting to right and left, his target still held high. And in less than a minute there was nobody in front of him, and he was leading his men against the second line.

Again three deep the redcoats waited. They did not move. They were less than a hundred feet away, and Malcolm ran with all the speed that was in him—but they did not move. The triple row of muskets faced him motionless, as though they were that many sticks protruding from a stone wall. Why didn't they fire? *Why didn't they fire?* It seemed as though his legs were made of iron. He was eager to be upon them and swinging his claymore. But the mud was as sticky as fish glue, and the distance lessened very slowly.

Then the air was all smoke again. Malcolm found himself on the ground, spitting mud from his mouth, reaching for the sword which had somehow been wrenched from his hand. He rose to one knee and was hit on the left shoulder with a musket stock. He rolled, rose again—and found himself facing a redcoat. For an instant the two men stared wildly at each other, their noses not more than three inches apart. Then Malcolm flashed out a dirk, and the redcoat flapped his arms, worked his mouth open and shut as though he would talk, and fell to the ground.

"Glenallan! Glenallan!"

He could no longer hear the pipes. He ran short distances here and there, looking for his claymore. A redcoat rushed up to him, but turned tail when Malcolm lifted his dirk. Another redcoat, his two hands around a musket barrel, stood nearby and dared Malcolm to approach him. But there were no Highlanders in sight.

Finally he found the claymore—the genuine Andrea Ferrara. He turned and looked around him.

He was on a high place. He remembered that the charge had been made up a hill, but he had not realized he had came so far. A breeze had lifted most of the smoke away. Running toward the distant black mountains and toward the swollen Nairn, stumbling, wailing, dragging their weapons behind them or throwing them away altogether, were the Highland clansmen. Here and there a company was orderly and marched with some semblance of military rule, stopping occasionally to fire at their pursuers, and loading again before they continued the retreat. Here and there a small group, pursued too enthusiastically, turned upon its pursuers with the ferocity of true desperation, beast-like, and fought on the spot until it was cut down entirely.

But most of the laddies retreating were broken with despair and concerned only with getting away from the Saxon soldiers. On both wings there were cavalrymen, shouting in triumph, slashing fiercely with their sabers, rising and falling as their horses heaved. The cannon were deserted. The Prince was not in sight.

Malcolm saw the Camerons now, on slightly lower ground, backing away before a series of rushes that the redcoats—the warm and well clothed redcoats, six times their number—were making upon them. He saw a group around the battle standard; the finest men were there, for Malcolm could make out the eagle feathers in their bonnets and he saw the brave swing of their broadswords. They surrounded a man who was on the ground, and they were fighting with grand ferocity.

And this was the end of Prince Charlie's hopes, and probably the end of Charlie himself. The glory was gone. It was only slaughter that was left now, and dirty retreating, and the insolence of the Southron. There were tears in the Glenallan's eyes and black despair in his heart as he viewed the scene.

BUT now the redcoat who held the clubbed musket, and who had been acting like a quarrelsome boy, was joined by another, and they rushed at him, the second man with his bayonet forward. The challenge renewed Malcolm's rage.

"Ye mongrels!"

He dropped on one knee, threw the bayonet off and returned a blow at the head which sent the second soldier staggering backward. But there were other redcoats, coming from behind these two.

The man with the clubbed musket seemed to lose courage suddenly—and then to regain it, when he observed that he was reenforced. For a minute there was such fighting that the laird did not know which direction he faced nor how many men he had struck. Nor did he realize that he had been struck himself and was bleeding. But somebody was fighting next to him—that much he did realize. And when, after a minute, the redcoats stepped back, amazed and frightened by the fury with which they had been received, Malcolm turned to embrace faithful Evan of Lochallan.

"Where are the men?"

Evan shook his head.

"I saw Old Angus killed—" He took Malcolm's arm and pointed toward the Camerons, and particularly toward the group that surrounded the fallen man.

"The tall one—"

It was Robert MacUalrig, enormous Bobby MacUalrig, who never left his chieftain's side. Malcolm felt sick at the sight. It meant that Donald was down.

"We must go there!"

Evan nodded; and the two of them ran down the slope toward the Cameron stand. There was Young Lochiel, eyes open and brightly flashing, but with a face that was pale as death; he lay on his back, seemingly unable to rise, though there was no wound evident on him. He smiled when he saw Malcolm—his old smile.

"The Macdonalds didn't move, Callum."

Angus MacClarke and MacMartin of Letterfinlay appealed to the Glenallan. Donald would not permit them to carry him away. It was certain death if they tried to hold this place. Could not his best friend remonstrate with him? Malcolm agreed.

"We must move, Donald. We must get over the river."

"Retreat?"

"We must, Donald."

"Aye. Well, you know best, Callum."

The cousins made a sort of litter from muskets and tartans, and Donald was lifted on this. His standard was still above him. His clansmen were two deep in back, Bobby MacUalrig towering above the others. And in this order the retreat began.

It was a dangerous business. They could not go rapidly, because Donald was tortured with pain and every movement of the clumsy litter forced to his mouth a scream that never passed his clenched teeth. Until they reached the Nairn, swollen high in this season, ice clogged and rushing seaward with a roar, they were not seriously disturbed.

Malcolm and Evan and Bobby MacUalrig and the others marched backward, claymores always ready, targets always high. The men who were carrying the litter knew where they were going. Malcolm and Evan and Bobby MacUalrig only knew that they would get there, if the life of every man but Lochiel paid for it. The redcoats were not so anxious to attack as previously they had been. Several gentlemen from other clans, cut off from their men and lost as Malcolm had been lost, joined this group as it proceeded along the river bank. They were the men who had penetrated farthest into the enemy ranks, the bravest, the most desperate.

Most of the redcoats, battle weary, contented themselves with pursuing and cutting down those Highlanders who were not so determined. But there were a few who were inspired to command an attack against this group, for they saw the Lochiel standard. Fortunately, none

of them had a charge left in his musket, and the rain had wet their powder, so that the fighting was all with bayonet and sword.

Malcolm was heartened just before the river was reached by the appearance of Great Davie, who joined the company as quietly as though nothing unusual had happened that day, and took his place on Malcolm's left side, Evan of Lochallan being on the right.

"You're wounded," Great Davie told him, without looking around. "You're bleedin' bad in the shoulder there."

"Aye. That's for later, Davie. Watch that tall fellow with the bayonet. He has his back up for us."

They walked slowly along the river bank, pursued, generally at a respectful distance, by some thirty or forty foot soldiers, a group equal to their own in number but certainly not in courage. The Lochiel banner, wet from the rain, drooped woefully, like the Stuart hopes.

"Where is Gillie Angus?" Malcolm asked.

"Kilt."

"Where is Paul?"

"I fear he's kilt too," Evan said. "He fell against me when we first charged. He wanted to run too, but he could no' stand."

"My brother John—he's kilt too," Great Davie offered. "I saw him drop. He was just ahead o' me. A good runner, John was. Two o' the *siler roy* hit him on the head wi' their muskets. I saw him, but I could no' get t' where he was."

"Aye," said Evan. "I saw John fall. He was all blood in front."

THEY had reached a ford. But it would be difficult crossing with the litter. Young Lochiel had fainted from pain—fainted without giving a groan. And a company of cavalrymen approached, waving their swords and riding straight toward the defenders. They were brave enough, now that victory was won; but their horses must have been new to battle, for the beasts reared and stamped when they got close to the Highlandmen.

"Hit 'em on the noses! On the noses, laddies!"

There was a minute of terrible stamping and slashing, and then the cavalrymen were gone, tugging at the reins and swearing loudly. Three warriors of the breacan were on the ground, one of them being Evan of Lochallan, whose ribs had been crushed by the hoofs of a horse and who was dead.

"A brave man," said Bobby MacUalrig. It was the first time MacUalrig had spoken since Malcolm had joined him on the field. "We needed him, too."

There was not time for lamentation. The cavalrymen dismounted a short distance away and, with as many of the foot soldiers as they could induce to go with them, started another and slower advance. It would be impossible to cross the river now. It would mean that every Highlander would be killed. They decided to let the litter cross, four men supporting it, and hold this ford as long as they could. Donald must be given a good start.

They were solemn about the business. They kept close together, in a single line, feet spread wide apart and just enough room between the men for the proper swing of a claymore.

"God be with us!" cried Bobby MacUalrig. "God grant that we hold 'em long enough!"

"Amen," said Malcolm.

Malcolm was backed against a little tree. He needed the support. He was horribly dizzy now; but whether this dizziness was caused by the exertions he had been undergoing, or by the almost constant clash of steel that was ringing in his ears, or by his wound—this he did not know. Perhaps it was caused by a realization of the disaster, a realization not yet fully come upon him but which was pressing against his temples like a hot vise. *Ochon!* The gallant Glenallans were lifeless lumps back there, and the gay Glenallan plaid was black with

mud and blood and trampled down entirely. Only Great Davie stood by his side—his right side now—and he and Great Davie were waiting to be slaughtered.

He felt no pain in his body, though he had seen the shoulder wound himself and knew that it was a bad one. But indeed, he had no feeling of any sort. The numbness that had been his before the battle, when hunger and cold had seemed to cut his nerves, was back in him here at the ford. He saw the red soldiers coming closer, and he discovered with alarm that he could not lift his target and claymore. He would have to stand and let them hack him down, pin him against the thing behind him; he was that weak. The thought made him wild. He dropped the target and managed to lift the broadsword with his two hands.

He had raised the blade barely in time. The first to attack him was a powerful brute, with plenty of courage but very little skill. Malcolm parried a head blow and returned with a cut to the shoulder. The redcoat dropped his weapon and, wheeling around, stumbled away. But he should have been killed. At any other time he would have been killed. He had left a big opening—there had been time for a grand swing . . . Malcolm knew that his strength was little now. He pressed hard against the tree at his back. If the tree was between his shoulders, then certainly he was standing upright. It was well that he should stand upright.

The second man was a hatless, wigless fellow who shrieked as he came. Close behind him was another and bigger man.

A blow was aimed at his left shoulder. He parried, but not with sufficient strength entirely to break the weight of the blow, so that the tip of the saber hit him gently. It must have touched the wound, for he felt a sudden sting there. He returned with a flank blow, which, to his amazement, was parried. He feinted for the head and struck again at the flank, and this time the Saxon jumped back in sudden terror.

Meanwhile the second man struck for the right shoulder. Malcolm could not parry in time, but he bent knee to the blow and was not badly cut. He thrust straight for return, sticking the fellow neatly. But that left his head unprotected.

He was down now, definitely down.

It was very difficult getting to his feet again. If only he could have held up his target . . . He knew he had been hit repeatedly, but the blows were not coming as fast as they should have come. Somebody was trying to protect him. It would be Davie, probably.

He struggled furiously to get to his feet, but his hands slipped again and again in the slime, and he could not stiffen his knees. But he felt that he could still swing the claymore if only he could get up. If only he didn't have legs—if only his legs were made of stone, or of wood, and could be planted firmly into the ground . . . All he needed was his right arm and his claymore . . .

But there were his pistols. He had forgotten about them—he tried to find them with his hand . . .

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BREATH OF FEAR

SQUALID Inverness, never noisy and never very warm, had been frozen to silence by the breath of fear. The citizens were afraid to talk, afraid to walk, afraid almost to move from their homes. For there were redcoats everywhere, with long bayonets. Injured England was taking revenge.

Since the battle there had not been a sign of resistance. But England was angry. The honor of English arms must be restored, somehow; and you could never trust these damned rebels, who were quiet today and bristling with weapons and shrieking with war cries tomorrow.

So Inverness, guiltless enough herself, remained silent. And it was a terrible

silence, ominous and depressing.

Lately, the presence of a tall woman with beautiful clothes had excited no little suspicion and alarm among the citizens. It was whispered that she was a spy sent to learn the whereabouts of Charlie. So the people of Inverness, old men and women and children, avoided her. She was too well dressed to be decent, and too eager for talk to be innocent of flagitious design. However, if spy she was, they told one another, she was a poor spy; for she could not speak above a dozen words of Gaelic.

She came down the street, holding her cloak tight about her, stepping carefully between the puddles with her satin slippered feet. There was some bewilderment, and much anxiety, in her expression. She passed a redcoat, who idled off duty in front of Luckie Anderson's place, and she approached two old men.

"Do you speak English?"

They shook their heads. They did speak a little English, both of them, but they preferred to deny this. Ignorance was the best policy in Inverness.

The tall woman held out a bit of dress breacan, vivid and impressive, plainly cut from the garb of a gentleman. Blocked from oral discourse, she asked them with her eyes whether they knew this design. But they only shook their heads again, edging away.

Another old man was passing—the only men left in Inverness were very old men. The tall lady stopped this fellow.

"Have you ever seen this? Do you know the man who wore this?"

He, too, shook his head. He glanced nervously at the redcoat who was watching them. He hobbled on.

An old woman, brown and dour, her face multitudinously wrinkled, her eyes bright and very small, came out of Luckie Anderson's place—and her, too, the tall English lady accosted. But the old woman shook her head. No, she had never seen that breacan.

It was so in every case. They did not know the tartan, or they would not admit that they knew it, being afraid of the soldiers. Lady Helen turned away with a sigh. Two days in the town, two miserable days, after a difficult and dangerous trip from the city, had gained her no knowledge of her husband's fate. She did not know whether he was dead or alive. She turned back toward the inn, drooping with despair, a pathetic figure.

The old woman shuffled in front of her.

"Let me see it again—"

Lady Helen presented the bit of plaid eagerly. The old woman examined it, turning it over, feeling it. Finally she nodded.

"It was a tall laddie, bonnily built? Black hair he had, and proud black eyes?"

There was something of the witch about this ancient hag. She was thin, and her features were shrewd and sharp, and her little eyes glittered like the eyes of a snake. Lady Helen trembled. But she asked quickly:

"Have you seen him? Where is he?"

The old woman shook her head again, clucking her tongue against the roof of her mouth.

"Kilt."

"Killed! In the battle?"

"Aye."

There was a faraway roaring, as of thunder. The frowning north hills rolled down over her. The black sky seemed to settle swiftly upon her, engulfing her in darkness. The little street, the redcoat, the two old men, the hag, were obliterated. Lady Helen felt that she was dying. She leaned against a friendly wall, and her eyes ached and her heart stood still.

This passed quickly, but it left her dizzy and sick. The old woman was walking away—walking with a straight, firm stride, a stride amazingly strong for a person of her years. Lady Helen pursued, running, and caught up with her. She took the old woman by the arm.

"Are you sure?"

The brown, many wrinkled face

turned up again, and there was deep suspicion in the eyes.

"Did I no' see wi' my own eyes? He was cold there on the river bank, an' blood a' o'er him."

"You were on the battlefield, afterward?"

"Aye."

"And he was dead? You're sure?"

"Did I no' see him," the old woman repeated angrily. "I dinna need the plaidie t' ken. 'Twas Macdomhnull Dhu, and dead as the dirt he was, like mony another braw laddie that day. Aye!"

She nodded, peering into the tall lady's face, frowning, and then, suddenly, she resumed her stride and was gone.

LADY HELEN walked slowly back to the inn. She went to her room on the second floor. It was a small room, dim and dirty. There was no fireplace, and in lieu of glass panes there were thin wooden shutters at the windows. There was no table, not even a chair; but a low, mean bed, and on the floor near the bed a bottle into the neck of which had been thrust a tallow candle.

She sat on the bed. Her feet were wet, but she did not remove her slippers. She kept her cloak wrapped around her.

She had suffered so much already that she had come to believe herself calloused to further pain. But there were darker shadows than she had supposed.

Not until the news of the last battle had been brought to her, in Robert Forbes' house in the Cannongate, had she realized what love it was she had for the Glenallan. Previously there had been such swift motion and romance. Her heart had been smitten with a suddenness that had stunned it. Excitement had drugged the hurt, as the excitement of a conflict drugs the wounds that conflict brings; and not until the quiet had come did Lady Helen feel the fullest pain.

She sat for a long while in the dark, dirty room. All sorts of crazy notions slid through her brain. She might jump out of the window. Or quit the inn and walk straight toward those far hills whence Malcolm had come, and walk and walk until she died. Or she might go to the place where he had fallen and die there. The old woman had said something about a river bank—she might drown herself.

One thing was certain, she would not go back to London. Gerald and her father, and her mother, too, would be genuinely pleased to learn that her husband had been killed. They would offer formal condolence; but in their own minds they would think it a convenient release, a welcome escape from the results of an indiscretion. They did not know Malcolm. Nor did they know Lady Helen herself. They need not expect her back in London. She still breathed and could move; but this was false evidence. For all true purposes her life was ended now. Half a person can not exist. Without a heart there can be no life in a body.

Because of the shutters it was very dark in the room and Lady Helen did not know whether night had come. She could hear, from where she sat, the faint whine of a breeze; and beyond the shutters a small rain descended indifferently, irregularly.

There came a knock at the door. Lady Helen had begun to weep, but she wiped away the tears and opened the door. It was the hag. She entered quickly, closing the door behind her. She went immediately to the window, peered through one of the largest cracks and listened for a long time. Finally satisfied, she turned to face Lady Helen, at whom she squinted suspiciously.

"Y' ken Callum Glenallan?" she asked suddenly.

"He was my husband."

The hag shook her head. She did not believe that. The son of Douglas of Glenallan would not marry an English lady, the hag said bluntly.

Lady Helen showed her wedding ring and explained.

"My grandmother was a Grant of Glenmorriston."

This information seemed to dispel much of the old woman's suspicion.

"Would it be Mary Grant, what went to Edinburgh an' married the German king's fellow—a gran' nobleman he was?"

"The Viscount of Appleby."

"Aye—" The hag nodded thoughtfully. Grant blood—that changed it. She came closer, whispering, "Macdomhnull Dhu married you in Edinbro town?"

"Yes, after they had taken the city, before they marched over the border. Prince Charlie attended the ceremony. Perhaps you—"

"Sh-h-h! It's no' safe t' be speakin' the name o' Charlie in this place. The *siler roy* are everywhere."

And now Lady Helen could bear this old woman's whispering no longer. She beat her hands together.

"Why do you ask me all this?" she cried. "You told me he was dead. What more is there? What can I do now? Why do you come here? Please get out! *Get out!*"

She had become suddenly hysterical, and she threw herself upon the bed, sobbing great sobs. The hag, not at all offended, patted her shoulder and spoke more softly to her.

"*Ochon,* lassie! It was in the street I tol' ye that. I did no' dare say anything else there. I did no' ken ye were a wife of Macdomhnull Dhu then."

Hope returned like a hard splash of light. Lady Helen sat up.

"Is he safe? Tell me! Is he alive? Talk to me!"

But caution was the old woman's first policy. The bayonets of the Saxon were not readily forgotten. She pursed her thin lips, stepping back away from the bed.

"Sh-h-h! There's a *siler roy* in front. They watch everywhere." She was at the door now. "Come after me. But do no' step wi' me. No' till I turn." And she was gone.

CHAPTER XIX

A MATTER OF DUTY

IT WAS very dark and the street was deserted, except for the hag, when Lady Helen quit the inn.

She followed the little hunched figure. She splashed through puddles, and the mud stained her satin slippers and showered in specks upon the bottom of her cloak. It was necessary that she walk fast, almost run to keep the hag in sight.

There came a rumble of thunder—louder, louder, then a great crash like the explosion of many cannon. A white blare of lightning blinded her for a moment, and she stopped. But the old woman ahead was rounding a corner of the street; and Lady Helen wrapped her cloak closer around her and hurried on. She did not dare let herself hope, or even think. She tried to keep her mind clear of worry and doubt by concentrating upon the elements around her—the hard rain that beat against her face, the brown, sticky street underneath, the wind and the thunder. She allowed herself only to realize that this meant Malcolm or death; and she was aware that without the one she must have the other.

At the edge of the town, where there was no candlelight, the hag turned suddenly and waited for the tall lady to approach. And when Helen was beside her she drew from the depths of her filthy dress a long *skene dhu,* or Highland poniard—triangular, single edged, very sharp. She held it in front of her, point downward. Helen did not move.

"Are you going to kill me?" Helen asked. The matter did not seem one of importance.

"Ye war no' lyin' t' me? 'Tis the truth ye're Callum Glenallan's wifey?"

"Why should I lie about that?"

"Maybe t' find where he is, lassie. Maybe it's a Saxon spy ye be."

But Lady Helen shook her head. She was no Saxon spy, she said. She was the wife of Sir Malcolm MacIldowie,

the Laird of Glenallan, and she was proud of it.

The hag softened. It was evident that she was a woman of swift changing moods. She replaced the poniard, which disappeared as though it were a strip of light blown out by the wind.

"An' weel ye might be proud, lassie. There's no' a man bonnier in a' the world. Come on."

She refused to explain, but strode on along the narrow cart path across the moor, her feet splashing furiously in the mud, and her arms, bare to the elbow and horribly skinny, swinging at her sides as though they would propel her on her way.

Lady Helen followed obediently.

They were clear of the town now, and walking across the slippery moor. Somewhere near here, perhaps on this very spot, the battle had been fought that had ended Prince Charlie's uprising. A few weeks earlier this very ground, perhaps, had been as wet with Scottish blood as now it was with rain water. But it was very dark around them, and Lady Helen did not know whether they were going toward the river or toward the north hills. The thunder was almost constant now; and occasionally the lightning, by sheer brilliance, obliterated every object from sight.

They walked for a long time, it was impossible for Helen to know how long, or how far they had come. And finally they arrived at a tiny native hut, a miserable structure, low and flimsy, more like a pigsty than a home for men. Here the old woman stopped. She motioned for Lady Helen to enter.

There was no lock on the door. But at the first sound of Helen's hand against the door a sharp, low voice was heard—

"Who is there?"

She stood, paralyzed. All this time she had not dared to hope, and now the relief overwhelmed her. She leaned against the doorway, unable, for a moment, to speak or move.

"Who is it? Speak or you're dead!"

She straightened herself and rushed into the hut. She could see nothing. But she cried, again and again, the name of her husband.

"Malcolm! Malcolm!"

Her head struck the low ceiling. She bumped against a wall, moved her hands down the rough wood, found a blanket, a body—and fell into a deep embrace.

The world was restored to her. She had come out of the grave, alive again. Malcolm's face was against her face, and Malcolm's arms around her.

"God bless you, Eilidh! God bless you!"

There was a knock of flint, a spicking of thin tinder, the sputter of a candle in the middle of the hut, and then light. The Glenallan and his wife stared at each other, blinking.

He was frightfully thin and pale as death. His cheeks were sunk to hollows of white flesh, which an uncouth beard and the dubious flicker of the tallow candle made to seem even more horrible. But his eyes glittered with the old spirit and his chin protruded as arrogantly as ever, and his head was held up as became a MacIldowie. He was lying on a low pile of straw, against the farther wall of the hut, and covered with his own breacan, which was very dirty now and torn in many places. He had been holding pistols, but he had dropped these when he heard his wife's voice.

She saw that his mouth was twisted back stiff as leather, and that his nostrils were squeezed tight. And she released him quickly.

"You're wounded! Oh, I've been hurting you!"

And he almost smiled.

"You could not hurt me, Eilidh."

His voice was clear, calm, soft. There was the faintest film of moisture over his eyes which might have been caused by the pain he felt or might have been caused by emotion.

"But you're wounded, Malcolm!"

"A wee cut in the shoulder. It will heal now you're here."

THE old woman held up her candle, the better to view this pair. She was very pleased with herself. The innumerable wrinkles of her face splayed themselves into a vast grin of pride, and she clucked her tongue repeatedly against the roof of her mouth.

"You should have bandages, Malcolm—"

"Sh-sh-sh! Do not be talking of it, lassie. They're only scars now, dried up and hard. Tell me about what you've been doing and how you've been feeling and whatever brought you to this place. Lord, but it makes me strong to look at you again!" Smiling, he spoke to the hag. "Aye, Jennie, it's my life you bring back to me first, and it's now my wife. If I was as rich as Argyll I could never be paying you for what you've done."

The old woman grinned so broadly that it seemed as though the top of her head would come off. She clucked her tongue like a fussy hen with chicks, and she bustled about the hut preparing her patient's supper. This was oatmeal mixed with whisky. Malcolm was delighted.

"Wherever did you get it, Jennie?" he cried when he saw her draw the bottle from her dress. The oatmeal had been in the hut.

"I stole it from Luckie Anderson's an' she's one can weel afford it, Macdomhnull Dhu, an' a' the *siler roy* buyin' at her place a' day an' a' night."

"You shouldn't steal, Jennie."

"Is it no' better I steal than you starve? It's Saxon money the slut's been takin'."

She set the dish before Malcolm, with a pewter spoon. To him it seemed the rarest of delights. To Lady Helen it seemed raw and mean; but Malcolm assured her that it was only a choice now between oatmeal with whisky and oatmeal with water.

During the meal, he explained. He had fallen by the banks of the Nairn while trying to cover Young Lochiel's escape. He could not remember much about the fighting, or did not care to tell her about it. Jennie—who seemed to have no other name—had been one of the natives who had swarmed out over the moor when the pursuit had taken the redcoats away. She had been looking for plunder, like the others. She had found Malcolm, and recognized his plaid. Her husband, one of the Glenallan clan, had been slaughtered at Sheriffmuir while fighting under the banner of Sir Douglas, and Jennie believed that she still owed allegiance to all the sons of the Black Donald. Forgetting thoughts of plunder, she had dragged this body away from the river bank to her hut.

"She's wonderfully strong, Eilidh; though you wouldn't think that to look at her. She must have dragged me a mile, and me as good as dead then."

In the hut, after almost two days of nursing, she had revived him; and since that time she had been watching for his welfare, begging food or stealing it, or, when she had the chance, working for it.

"She'd be starving herself, if I let her," the Glenallan whispered. "You lived in London, lassie, and you don't understand the Highlanders."

She had bandaged him, hunted herbs for him and washed his wounds. There was a physician at Inverness, but Jennie and Malcolm had agreed that it would not be safe to send for him. She had guarded her secret carefully, and the Glenallan's survival was not known to any but these three. Time and again the Saxon soldiers had marched past the hut, but they had evidently considered the place too mean for habitation, and had not intruded. Malcolm had given his dirk to the kindly hag, but his pistols were with him always.

"They may get me yet, lassie, but I'll kill two of them first."

His wounds, Helen learned, were numerous, and at least one of them—the one in the left shoulder—was serious still. He could walk a few steps, lean-

ing against the wall of the hut. But he was not strong enough to venture outside.

In town, Jennie talked little but listened much; and she kept her patient informed as well as any news letter service might do. She told him about the butchery—about the Duke of Cumberland and General Hawley and their orgy of slaughter. She told him how, for weeks after the battle, the gallant clansmen had been hunted in every part of the nation, and killed without mercy and without trial when they were found; how estates were confiscated, and women stripped naked and made to run footraces in the British camps, and old men hacked to pieces in the very streets of the town because they did not salute promptly enough when an officer passed by.

Jennie told him, too, how Bonnie Prince Charlie had ridden like a madman to Simon Frazer's castle, and from there to the Clanranald's seat, and finally to the Islands of the West, where he skulked even now, in disguise, hunted by every available man of the English army and every available ship of the English navy. She had told of Young Lochiel's escape to Lochabar, and of his concealment in a mountain hut with Cluny Macpherson and the Young Macpherson. She had told him of the capture of Lord Lovat, and the Earl of Kilmarnock, and Lord Balmerino, who before the uprising had been plain Arthur Elphinstone; and how Lord George Murray and the Duke of Perth and some others had escaped on a ship to France.

"*Ochon,* lassie! There's little the damned redcoats haven't done. But they've not caught the Prince yet. He's on the mainland now, in the Mackinnon country. When I get well, I'm going to him, Eilidh. He'll be needing me."

"Haven't you done enough, Malcolm? Haven't you done your duty?"

He looked at her reproachfully, shaking his head.

"Not when he's in danger, Eilidh."

He was finished with the oatmeal, and he pushed the dish aside. He took her two hands again.

"All the time I've been away from you, Eilidh, I've been waiting for the day I'd be seeing you again, and the two of us happy and with no war. There's a sweetness in you, lassie, that takes the very breath from out o' me.

"But ye ken I can't be faithless to my fathers, Eilidh. My Prince needs me. He's near the Glenallan country and the Cameron country. Can I sneak away to France, and him a penniless wanderer hiding behind trees in a land that should be giving him hospitality?" He shook his head sadly. "Maybe he'll get safe away before I'm well and able to walk again. But if he doesn't, then I've got to go and help him."

CHAPTER XX

MALCOLM GETS READY

MALCOLM had called it "just a wee cut in the shoulder". In fact, it was a serious wound. For two days after Lady Helen's arrival at the hut he tossed on his straw with fever, muttering deliriously. Old Jennie guarded him with jealous eyes, administering herb extracts when she could induce him to take them, and occasionally at night droning ancient incantations over him.

Lady Helen wanted to send for a physician.

"It would be sendin' your lord t' the gallows," the hag cried.

Malcolm, too, objected.

"He'd only call the military, and I'm damned if I'll be their prisoner."

But it was a long, hard battle back to health. He had lost a great quantity of blood. The food that Jennie bought in the town, with Helen's money, helped to strengthen the patient; but it was a month before Malcolm was able to hobble around the hut.

Meanwhile no man ever received more loving care. With the rude, miserable means at their disposal, Jennie and

Lady Helen, the ignorant peasant and the heiress from London, did everything within their power to bring energy back to Malcolm. And they watched, meanwhile, for the redcoats. They never lighted a fire in the daytime, for fear that the smoke would betray them; and at night they burned peat only after they had filled the cracks in the door and walls with wet earth, to prevent the light from escaping. Lady Helen rarely left the hut—only on foggy days or at night. Jennie went down to the town for the food and the whisky, but she avoided all talk with acquaintances.

All this care Malcolm accepted from the old woman as a right. The common people of the Highlands had always served him. It was their duty, indeed their privilege, for he was sprung from Donald the Black.

But that his wife should risk her health and her wealth, her reputation, her very life—this amazed him and delighted him. A lady from London, accustomed to all London's comfort and all London's fashion, to be living in such a shack! She might return and be forgiven. The society in which she moved was not too prudish to permit this. She might go back to the ease and the luxury to which she was used and which were hers by right of birth and fortune. Her father would accept a penitent; the marriage could be annulled; and there was her choice still of wealthy suitors.

Apparently she did not consider this. And Malcolm was glad that his love had been well placed. For he would have loved her anyway. He could never have resisted her. That she had shown herself to be faithful as well as beautiful seemed to him a proof of divine generosity, and during the long, dark nights in the hut, while she slept near him, with Jennie on the other side, he mumbled many a prayer of thanks to heaven.

But obviously his duty to his Prince came first. As he felt stronger he thought more often of it.

"I'll go to Glenallan first. Fergus will know what's happened to Donald and Macpherson and the rest. He'll know where Prince Charlie is, too. Jennie told me today that they're saying in the town that Charlie's back on the mainland again, but the Saxons are hunting him with every soldier they have."

Usually, when he talked like this, she nodded and smiled and said nothing. But once she asked him—

"Do you never think of taking me with you?"

The question shocked him. He started, staring at her.

"Take you! Why, lassie, do you ken what country I'm going through? It's military everywhere. I'll be spending every night outside."

"I would rather spend the night outside," she said, "than spend it in this smelly place."

Old Jennie, at the time, was outside cutting peat.

"But, lassie, there's all sorts of danger. There's the redcoats—"

She stamped her foot, suddenly indignant.

"What do I care for the redcoats! I'm sick of hearing about the redcoats! I'm not going to leave you again!"

"But—"

"I don't care how much danger there is! You've been through all the danger in the world and you're still alive. I won't let you go off again. If you go, I'll go with you!"

For her, it was an extraordinary outburst. She had always been so amenable to his will, always so quiet and agreeable in his presence.

But it did not annoy him. Rather, it pleased him. He could not take the proposal seriously; it was not possible that this slim young wife of his could cross Scotland with him to the wild west coast. He shook his head, smiling; and to get her away from the subject he began to tell her about his ancestral home, concerning which she had more than once displayed a lively curiosity.

"It's a braw country, Eilidh. But rough. There's many a deep stream,

rushing fast. And the hills are high, and the rocks are steep and sharp. But I know every path there is. I've hunted across every foot of it. There were many times I was lost in that London of yours; but you could not lose me in my own Lochabar, no matter if it was always blackest night.

"Where Allan's Castle is, it's the middle of a deep glen. That's Glen Allan. The MacIldowies have owned it since the Son of God came down to earth—aye, and before that, Eilidh. We've always been in that land. It was Malcolm Cleanmor, the great king, who gave it to my ancestor; but the MacIldowies had owned it long before that time. That was just a gesture. My ancestor was called Allan after the Norman who was steward of the Plantagenet king in England. But we were all Gaelic, ye ken. There's not a drop of Norman blood in us . . ."

She smiled tenderly.

"You lived there all your life, Malcolm? You have no other estate besides Glen Allan?"

He was amazed at the question.

"Lord, lassie! Why should I be wanting another estate? There's no bonnier place in all the world than Allan's Castle. Maybe you'd think, at first, that it was a gloomy sort of place. It's big and bare, ye ken—but when you get to live in it awhile, you get to love it, Eilidh."

He sighed.

"But it's Fergus'll rule there after this, Eilidh. I'll not see it but once more. But the clan won't die out, lassie. There are children in Glen Allan still, and they'll grow up and have children of their own. *Ochon!* There's never been so few of them under the MacIldowies, not at any time! The damned Campbells and the wars with the Southrons have done that. There was a time when the Glenallan could call out two hundred claymores—aye, and more, Eilidh, if the Campbells were coming. But the clan won't die out," he boasted. "It could never die out!"

IT PLEASED her to have him talk like this. For one thing, he was handsomest when he was describing something or somebody he loved; enthusiasm sprayed a good light on his somber countenance, and his eyes gleamed thrillingly. And then, she never tired of observing the startling contrasts that his nature held. With her, alone, he was loquacious and affectionate; elsewhere he was monosyllabic, cold, haughty. There were times when he was frugal, and times when he was generous to extravagance. A stranger would call him cautious, hard headed; yet she knew him to be a man of quick temper, who loved danger and sought it, who drew his sword to wade through romance as a traveler might wade through a swollen mountain stream.

For the whole business, now that she was with him again, seemed to take on the aspect of high adventure. Previously she had thought of the war, the civil war, with horror. Communication was bad, property was endangered, people were suspicious, the soldiers everywhere were displaying an authority they never possessed in peace times; and worst of all, her husband was in grave danger, night and day. No good could come of it. Prince Charles, gay, gallant, picturesque, would be captured and hanged. The proud Highland chieftains, with all their finery and all their quaint customs, would be attainted and killed. It was a deplorable affair, and only tragedy could be expected from it.

So she had thought, previously. But now that defeat had come, and the war itself was over, Lady Helen began to see it all as a brave, grand thing. She began to understand her husband's attitude. Tragic it was, but there was also about it something that was romantic. There would have been glory in victory; in defeat there was poetry. The Prince, far away in hiding, had become even more fascinating than he had been when, clad in his brilliant dress clothes, with all his orders, he had led her

through a minuet at old Holyroodhouse.

The more she thought on it the more eager she was to accompany her husband on his trip to the west coast. She, too, wanted to see the business through to its end.

She had plenty of leisure in which to allow this thought the freedom of her mind. Malcolm, though generally more talkative than she had ever known him to be, was given also to long spells of moody silence; and she respected these spells by keeping silence herself. She was bereft of the ordinary means of killing time. There were no theaters, no dinners, no novels to read or routs to attend. She could not ride; she could not even walk, except at night when walking was dangerous in a country not familiar to her.

She realized now what a great portion of her time she had previously spent at toilet. There was none of that in the hut. She worried frequently about her appearance.

Deprived of paint and powder, panniers and patches, she feared that her beauty was disappearing. She felt marred, smudgy. Wet feet had given her a cold in the head, and her nose was red. Her hair, unwashed these many weeks, was dull and straight and lifeless. Her fingernails had split, and her hands were red and rough. The freckles were reappearing on her face—more of them than had ever before been permitted to show themselves. All the stiffness was gone from her one dress, and what had been a charming simplicity, when she had quit Inverness, was beginning to look suspiciously like downright dowdiness. Jennie was efficient with her needle, but not skilful; every time Jennie mended a tear she somehow succeeded in detracting a little more from the original smartness of the one dress.

Malcolm, when Helen hinted her fears to him, shook his head impatiently. He seemed to be angry at the very suggestion.

"You are beautiful," he said. "There isn't anybody in the world as beautiful as you!"

"You say that because you want to console me."

He positively glared at her then.

"I say it because I ken what I'm talking about. Do I look blind? You might be dressed in the filthiest rags, lassie, and you'd still be fairer than any of them. You're beautiful *inside*, and that's the reason."

But he himself was fussy about clothes. It was another thing about him that she was to learn. All the sneers that she had heard him cast upon the fops of London were in her mind when she helped to prepare his new kilt.

Among the things she had brought to the hut with her was the piece of Glenallan dress breacan Malcolm had given her before their marriage. She suggested that Jennie make a new kilt for him, since his own kilt was so torn as to be almost no covering at all. Malcolm at first protested that he would not take back a gift. Did she think he was a damned Lowlander? But later, when he was able to hobble about the hut, he agreed that a new kilt was a real necessity.

And once the work was started, Helen helping whenever she was able, he began to display a nice taste in pleats. It must be just so. This way there was too much red showing, that way there was too much of the black. Now it was a finger too long, now a finger too short. He became, for the three days that passed in the making of the garment, a genuine nuisance. And when it was finally fitted on him—an act which itself he made into an elaborate rite—he wore it with the air of a man resigned to acceptance of a sloppy piece of work.

Still it made him feel good to be clad in new, clean breacan. They patched his waistcoat and short coat as best they could, and he strapped the broad leather belts about him again, and hung the pistols in their places. The women could never know how much he missed the claymore, the genuine Andrea Fer-

arra. But it was a comfort to have still the pistols and the dirk.

As the days passed he talked less often about the trip to rejoin Prince Charles. He had not forgotten it. On the contrary, he was growing more and more excited at its approach. But he was hoping that his wife would abandon her intention to accompany him on what he knew was going to be as arduous and dangerous a trip as ever he himself had made.

Then one night, very late, when Jennie was asleep and snoring ruggedly, he said to her:

"I'm well now, Eilidh. I walked half down to the town and back tonight, and didn't feel a pain. There's no sense in staying here any longer. Tomorrow I'm going back over the hills."

In the dark she felt for his hand, found it, squeezed it with troubled force. The quiet announcement had disarmed her. She had expected some formality about the departure. Malcolm was formal about every small thing, it seemed, but casual about the great things.

"In the morning?" she asked.

"When the dawn comes up. Before the military are out snooping, lassie." He slid an arm under her neck, and pressed his cheek against hers, and was silent for a time. "You'll be going back to London?" he asked finally.

"I'll be going along with you, Malcolm."

There was no outburst, no storm. Malcolm, indeed, said nothing at all for a minute or longer. Then he asked quietly—

"You're determined?"

"I am determined," she said.

He kissed her, in the dark. It was a light kiss, rather a gay kiss, the sort a dandy might give. She could not see him, but she suspected that he was smiling, perhaps even grinning. Did he permit himself mirth when there was no light—this grave, ceremonious husband of hers? She wondered. For all the intimacies of the hut, he was as much a mystery to her as ever he had been. She had expected a storm and he had kissed her!

He said:

"I love you." And then, "We must get the sleep lassie. No more talking. It's a hard trip. Jennie will wake us."

"Malcolm—"

"Sh-h-h! It's a hard trip, lassie, and we'll be needing the sleep. Good night to you."

"Good night, Malcolm."

CHAPTER XXI

GLENALLAN

THREE weeks it had taken them to get to the edge of the Glenallan country, and though Malcolm seemed to thrive on hardship and to breathe in strength with the mountain air, it was persistent misery for Helen.

They had not always been able to travel, even in the daytime. For four days and four nights they had remained in the hut of a shepherd who spoke no English, but who treated Malcolm, for reasons Helen never understood, as though Malcolm were a crowned king, and who wept when they departed. This pause had been because of the near presence of a company of militiamen. Again, when some redcoats were close at hand, they had crouched beneath an overhanging rock, half exposed to a steady, monotonous drizzle of rain, and surrounded by angry gnats, for a day and a night and a considerable part of the next day.

Malcolm tried to be sympathetic. Sometimes, when Helen was too tired to walk any farther, he would carry her for a few miles—carry her in his arms as easily as though she were a child. In spite of all the blood he had lost, he was, from the very beginning, far stronger than his wife; and every day in the hills appeared to give him even more strength. He walked with long swinging strides. When they stopped at night, usually out of doors, it was Malcolm who scouted the countryside immediately surrounding before he permitted a real rest: and it was

Malcolm who dickered with what few peasants they ventured to accost, and who got what food they had, chiefly oatmeal and brandy. He tried to be sympathetic; but he could not understand why she did not like oatmeal and brandy.

When she was tired or cold, as she was most of the time, he had one unfailing suggestion—a drink of brandy; or, if that were not available, a drink of whisky or of *usquebaugh*. At the shepherd's hut, on one memorable night, they had indulged in mutton, with minced collops and butter and ginge bread. But mostly they lived on oatmeal and brandy and nothing else. Not good brandy, either. It used to give Helen a headache, and she would stumble along with hot, tired eyes, sore feet, and splitting, singing temples.

For three days before they came to the edge of the Glenallan country they had not spoken to anybody. There were more redcoats hereabouts, and Malcolm was especially careful. Sometimes they saw peasants or militiamen, but they remained in hiding as these fellows passed.

"I don't like their looks," was Malcolm's answer when Helen suggested, once, that they hail an apparently unarmed pair of mountaineers.

That was enough. Malcolm had seen the pair first, long before Helen had been able to see them; and he and Helen stayed behind some rocks until these men were well out of sight again.

"We're almost there now, aren't we, Malcolm?"

"We'll be at the end of the glen tomorrow morning." He was spreading tartan blankets on the moist earth. "When we see Fergus again it will be all right."

"You're very fond of your brother, Malcolm."

"Aye."

"Won't it be dangerous for him to entertain us at the castle?"

"We'll not stay at the castle," said Malcolm. "You will, aye. You'll get some rest and some fresh clothes. But I'll stay away somewhere near, so the soldiers can't have any excuse for arresting Fergus."

"Do you know of any place like that?"

"Aye."

He had been in high spirits, and had talked much about what a bonnie lad Fergus was, and what a bonnie place was Allan's Castle. But as they approached Glenallan he became more taciturn, grimmer. He was brusk, as he had been in London, almost impolite. She knew him well enough to realize that this meant he was excited. So she was silent.

In fact, she was too tired to do much talking, anyway. It had been a long, hard day. Malcolm had walked faster than usual, and he had been less patient when she begged for rest. She suspected that, even now, he wanted to continue and was annoyed at the necessity of stopping for sleep; and she thought that, if he had been alone, he would have walked on until he came to Allan's Castle. But she would not permit him to carry her any farther for fear that he would overstrain himself, and she could not walk another step of her own accord. So they had stopped.

Every night was like this. It seemed years since they had quit Jennie's hut near Inverness—Jennie's miserable hut that seemed now, in memory, a veritable palace for comfort and luxury. Helen had no chance to think; she was too tired to think. Night after night she released her muscles like this, sinking back upon a blanket spread over nothing softer than the bare earth—or, if they were lucky, some scrubby moss—and closing her eyes and aching all over until sleep rushed suddenly upon her like a night wind.

AND so it was again this night. She remembered Malcolm, utterly silent, sitting near her, his back against a tree, his eyes wide open—just sitting there, wrapped in his own tartan, staring very intently at nothing whatever. She called a goodnight to him and he smiled the tiniest bit, without turning his head. And the next thing she knew he awakened her.

It was still dark under the trees, but through the mist she could see the faintest, struggling streaks of a dawn reluctant to make full appearance. She was still all one ache, but she knew that Malcolm was eager to be away.

"There's nothing wrong?" she asked.

He smiled, shaking his head, and he kissed her. But he said nothing at all. She knew that he was tremendously excited. What a lot his home meant to this man! She watched him as he shook out her tartan and folded it, and threw it over his shoulder. There was nothing for breakfast, and she knew it. He offered her the brandy bottle, almost empty; but she shook her head. She was thoroughly sick of the taste of brandy. So, still silent, he led the way across the bleak hillside on which they had camped.

The manner in which he found his way across these hills, which all looked the same to her, had been a marvel to Helen since the first day of the trip. He told her that they were going far north to avoid the military, and he admitted that some of the countryside was strange to him, but still he seemed to proceed as though his senses rather than his memory were leading him—as though he were a well trained hunting dog on a good scent.

Now, so near to Glenallan, he moved faster than ever, his long legs carrying him across the broken, rocky hillside so rapidly that she was obliged, sometimes, to break into a nervous little trot in order to keep him in sight. She told herself, as she stumbled and staggered after him, that it could not last much longer.

Nor did it. Suddenly Malcolm broke into a run, and for a few minutes she could not see him at all. Then he reappeared on the brow of the hill not far away, his back to her. She ran toward him, and she came up behind him very quietly. He did not turn.

"This—this is the glen?" she panted.

"Aye."

It was a small glen, long but narrow. They stood on a hill near the middle of it, not far from the castle; but the ground mist still swirled slowly below, and for a few minutes Helen could not distinguish that building clearly. She had, first of all, a sense of terrible desolation. Nothing moved in the glen. Not even a bird circled overhead. It was odd that she should feel this, for in the past three weeks she had seen very few human beings and no village or hamlet at all, and she should have become accustomed to desolation. But at its very bleakest, the countryside through which she had been traveling had seemed to conceal vitality, life, while Allan's Glen seemed to be absolutely dead.

Allan's Castle was a small, brown building constructed of ancient, rough stone—a square, ugly, strong edifice with two box-like towers. Around it ran a narrow moat which appeared to be filled with rocks and rubbish. In front were a pair of iron gates, one of them off its hinges entirely and sagging sadly, the other unhinged at the top and leaning away from its companion. Behind was the loch, cold and perfectly clear, across the surface of which the mist moved very slowly, weirdly. The utter loneliness of the scene appalled her. There was not a wisp of smoke, not a vine or flower.

Not far from the castle gates, and on the left of a little mound there, she saw a group of square black masses; she thought at first they were masses of black rock, but she saw, straining her eyes through the mist, that they were ruined houses, huts that had been burned to the ground. Then, suddenly, she realized what had happened. She looked up at Malcolm. His mouth was drawn tight, his eyes were staring wildly at the castle. She thought she had never seen him look so grim, so dangerous. She was afraid of him again.

"You stay here," he said. "Keep back of these rocks."

"You'll be careful, Malcolm!"

"Aye. Stay here."

TO BE CONCLUDED

GULO *the* DEVIL

By PAUL ANNIXTER

GULO was the largest and grimmest of a family of four *carcajous,* or wolverenes, born in the dank heart of a great log jam that choked the mouth of a spruce shadowed canyon. He was a small fighting replica of his fierce old mother within two weeks from the hour he first saw light, for young wolverenes have little of the weakness of infanthood and nothing of its appealing innocence. His small, murky, smoldering eyes already filtered hate upon the world, his lips curled in a perpetual evil leer that showed the diminutive fangs beneath, and his squat form already evinced the loafing, truculent swagger peculiar to the *carcajou* clan alone. For hating, it seemed, was the keynote of Gulo's existence, and combat was as much a part of him as the breath he drew.

Long ago white hunters and trappers gave the tribe of Gulo the name of glutton, for although most animals eat only to live, it had been observed from earliest days that the wolverene of the North apparently lived but to eat. It was the French who called him *carcajou,* a term inferring many things vile and execrable, all of them well earned, all of them true. But the Northern Indians, ever more apt at nomenclature, came nearer than any to the mark. The wolverene was a fiend, their legends said, with a lifelong feud against man and all below. They named him in their dialect the Devil, and the term is fitting, for he is wholly bad. No beast that walks is more thoroughly hated by man, for in his actions he is more like criminal man than any other creature.

More odious than the skunk, more crafty than the fisher-marten, his first cousin, and more surly and ferocious

even for his size than the badger, whom he resembles more than any other living thing—one begins to get the picture. The facts that a fox is stupid beside him, that he glories in robbery, slaughter and destruction, and that he does these things not blindly after the manner of other beasts, but with devilish intent, after the ways of humans in premeditated vengeance or torture, must be added. A black demon is the wolverene, and is classed among the vermin.

The family of gluttons appeared very early in the spring, while the snow still lay deep in the steep walled mountain canyon. Tons of old snow, that had alternately frozen and softened, clogged the interstices of the log jam and its slow perpetual drip and trickle combined with an atmosphere of dank humidity and rotting logs made up the world that Gulo knew for the first five months. The prevailing undercurrent to it all was a deep subterranean throbbing that one could feel rather than hear, permeating everything—the everlasting song of the mountain stream that cut its way deep down amid the rocks.

The whole of the spruce choked gully was part of that world of muffled shadow. Its length was littered with similar windfalls, snags and masses of rock rubble from the high slopes above. The sun never shone directly there, and the dampness was never wholly sucked from the ground even in midsummer. But it was a realm quite to Gulo's liking, for in life and disposition he was a creature of the shades.

Gulo's family was not a peaceable one, and there was little play among the young gluttons. The potential ferocity of all four was practically that of full grown wolverenes from the hour they began to walk, and daily they proved the aptness of their names. They quarreled among themselves incessantly and it was not a nice thing to see. They did not strike in play like the young of other creatures, but with every intent to maim.

By the time they were four months old the young wolverenes had begun ranging for short distances up and down the gully on tours of hunting and investigation. Seeing Gulo thus, one would never have taken him for a beast of the weasel persuasion. He resembled a cross between an overgrown badger and an undersized bear. His blunt, dog-like mask and his abortive bottle brush of a tail pointed to the ground; back raised in a rough and stubborn arch, he planted his hairy, hand-like feet squarely on the ground as he walked, after the manner of a bear, and he slouched and lowered like any footpad.

But when he raised his head and one saw his face—it was simply not a face of this world at all. It was that of a nightmare, the visage of a fiend who should never have been allowed to stray from the nether world, even by night. And in the low and brutal brow, and the small, grim phlegmatic eyes lurked that something else which made the beast what he was in the animal world, a malignant knowledge and cunning beyond the right of any four-footed creature to possess.

Upon a day in his fifth month Gulo evinced something of that part of him which lay beneath the surface. It was a Spring day packed with the spirit of adventure, tingling with the lure of the hunt. Gulo had wandered apart from the rest of the family, a hundred yards or more through the dense spruce silences, when he paused abruptly to cut the breeze with his moist blunt cleft of a nose.

Afar came the microscopic snick of a twig beneath the foot of a wary doe, but it was not that which caught Gulo in his tracks. Nor the impression as of a soundless, smoke-gray shadow melting away in the thickets on his left. Gulo cared not what the shadow might or might not be, for he was devoid of infantile fears. Behind him were hundreds of generations of ascendancy over all other fur bearers, an inbred and insolent assurance, which through the ages had encountered none of that chas-

tening discipline that has taught circumspection to the fox and lynx.

It was no fright, but the scent of partridge asleep nearby that held Gulo at pause.

In his short life he had neither seen nor tasted partridge, but the scent had roused the memory-centers of a thousand years, and Gulo proceeded to efface himself amid the blotted gloom on his first meat trail. No glutton ever runs down prey; his cunning lies in stealth. The manner of Gulo's going in that place of shadows was a marvel for so clumsy looking a beast, and anon there came panicky sounds from the thickets, as of flutterings, and bird cries of "Murder!"

There was a low, quick, wrenching rush, a pounce here, a crunch there, a number of lightning swipes with a heavy looking, bear-like forearm, then silence. And the covey of partridge had gone, four of them hurtling away over the ridge, the other three blasted out of this life, all in that one lightning attack.

Gulo crouched amid the three corpses, snarling the baleful and almost soundless snarl of his kind that made him look as if he were snatching at flies in the air. Young and immature though he was, the inimical look of him there, red fanged with feathers on his chops, was a sight to return to one for a lifetime. It was a sight, in fact, to daunt the boiling wrath of an old wildcat crouched eight feet up on the branch of a nearby spruce. The wildcat had been that suggestion of shadow Gulo had glimpsed some five minutes before. He it was who should have "done business" with those partridge, by right of discovery; but ever most circuitous, he had taken to a tree instead at the sound of Gulo's shuffling approach.

Almost beneath that very branch Gulo had passed in his stalk and from the shadows above had come the faintest of snickers as the cat dug cruel claws into bark. The snicker was not of humor, however. The cat quivered throughout its flattened length in exquisite anticipation, but again he could not quite make up his mind, which lost him the feast. For when matters get along to the final stalk it is decidedly no time for the unready or weak nerved.

AS WE have said, there was complete abeyance of action until Gulo had ended his perfect stalk with a deft slaughter. It was then as he settled himself to the feast that the wildcat loomed tardily on the scene. Gulo raised his flat head at the first rasp of claws on bark, and simply watched as the enemy approached in a menacing crouch, bristling and hissing and flaming with threats in a manner calculated to drive any wild thing, especially a youngster of five months, mad.

It was the wildcat's special game, a bit of high powered hypnosis that won half his battles before he had sprung. But with a young glutton—hypnotize your grandmother! Danger was the spice of life to Gulo's breed. He stirred not a hair nor an inch beneath the transfixing glare of those straw colored eyes.

No dramatics of bluff or defiance, no sign of the sudden blink that betrays fear—only there lived and almost spoke in Gulo's small, green shadowed eyes an imperturbable assurance, and a sense of hate beyond expression. The hate that gleams in the eyes of all persecuted ones —the vermin—who have stood out against and worsted all other things from the dawn of antiquity. For the tribe of Gulo lived on earth, unchanged and just as they are, before even the age of ice, and matched ferocity with the cave lion and saber tooth tiger.

Something of this got to the wildcat and gave him pause. Sent him circling round and round with Gulo's blunt nose following him like a compass needle. Until finally in sheer nerves and frustration he launched an attack with a flying leap and a scream as of a fiend in torment.

Ensued a dance, a sort of mad cancan down in the spruce gloom, quite indescribable except that the cat fur-

nished the motive power. That is to say, he danced and bounded and carried Gulo along as supercargo. He was no longer a cat from any outer aspect. He was a spinning, spitting, swearing apparition, a fiery eyed catharine wheel of horror, with claws that revolved like four living buzz saws after the time honored and terrible tactics of his kind. Gulo failed even to flinch. He had simply driven into the face of that buzz saw and secured a hold—one single hold after the way of the weasels—and held on. His skin, it may be mentioned, was incredibly thick and tough and loose as an overcoat, as it is with all his clan.

His hold was in the meaty part of the wildcat's foreleg, and as the moments passed Gulo, impervious to the slashing and roweling that would have ripped another beast into patchwork, ground in and in with a pair of jaws stronger for their size than those of any other creature excepting the hyena. They met in the bone at length, like the interlocked teeth of a trap, which ended the battle, with a scream from the cat as of untamed devils. In spite of a leg which dangled by skin, the wildcat did a devil's exit, simply dissolving like a puff of gray smoke into the shades and was seen no more. He was no coward and had thought himself something of a despot, but he was not designed to fight devils straight from the pit.

The final and most significant part of this tableau occurred some ten minutes later. Gulo had fallen to on the kill, and the taste of the fresh blood had filled him with a new and terrible hunger such as he had never dreamed of, the forerunner of that everlasting and bottomless voracity of his kind, for meat and for slaughter. As he was thus engaged, the hush was broken again by some creature or creatures, ascending the slope through the ranked and serried aisles of the spruce, and without regard to stealth. That and a vagrant eddy of air informed Gulo that it was his own unsavory family come to share in the spoils.

That meeting was not nice at all. Gulo awaited them sitting down on his ragged tail and snarling in company with the snarl of the stream far down amid the rocks. One of his sisters was well in the lead and, without a glance at Gulo, she fell upon one of the partridges ravenously. And Gulo promptly fell upon her. She clung to the bird like a leech, snarling, mouth full of bloody feathers, squalling a warning battle cry. No mouthing about that tussle, but a brutal and murderous mêlée. With the blood lust on her there was no way of quelling her outside of killing her, and Gulo did so, making no bones about it. He had just finished the job when his brother and other sister arrived.

A cat creature with the blood madness on it would have engaged one of the newcomers in further combat, leaving the other to make free with the partridge, for most animals can think of but one thing at a time. Gulo, however, like man, could think of all things all the time. He seized two of the slain birds and beat a rapid retreat, leaving the brother and sister to fight it out together. When the she-wolverene arrived on the spot some half hour later, she interrupted a scene of cannibalism. She disciplined her remaining offspring and, to an outsider, by the look of things a further slaughter was being enacted, for the mildest reprimanding of the *carcajou* kind has the look of a pitched battle.

Two hours later, however, life resumed its flow for the family. The mother wolverene wasted no time in grieving. Stark savagery was familiar to her.

The happenings of that first day's hunt were significant of the luck and fearless ferocity which were to accompany Gulo through life. He had outwitted the partridge, bested a wildcat, killed his sister and cheated the rest of his family all in an hour. Quite something, that, for a stripling. But it could not be said of Gulo, as of a youngster of any other breed, that he had learned decisive lessons in those crucial

moments of conflict, or that the fibers of him had stiffened under the experience. Such statements would mark a complete ignorance of wolverenes.

A wolverene's fibers need no hardening, and his craft is ingrained and seasoned at birth. Gulo had simply run true to form. The wildcat, for instance, under luckier circumstances might have achieved Gulo's death, but he could have cowed him no whit, and not even an elephant could have put him to flight.

As the summer drew on, Gulo grew in size, strength and cunning. He possessed a strength at least twice that of any other young creature for his size. His natural restlessness, which led him to prowl ceaselessly through the hundred yard log jam, hoisting himself by his forearms and sometimes swinging from the underside of logs like a sloth, helped to keep him in the pink of condition. And daily as he grew, ferocity and appetite mounted in him until they were almost the whole of him. More and more he lived, as the Indians had said, but for the kill.

Few things of his youth could correspond with that of other wild things. Fear, the portion of most animals, played little or no part in his makeup. His musky meat was no fit food for either man or beast, and all the greater killers knew it. So Gulo had little knowledge and no care of enemies outside those of his own vile tempered family. A masterful truculence took the place of timidity in him. The reeking odor from the den beneath the logs warned all creatures of the gluttons' permanent abode, and grim indeed would be the hunter who trespassed there.

DURING the early Summer the young gluttons followed their mother on longer and longer jaunts along the surrounding slopes. Nothing of playful affection or sportiveness evident in these outings. Every member of the family was grimly on his own; if a rabbit or marmot were killed by the old female, it meant pitched battle between the youngsters until the last shred of hide was torn to pieces and bolted. Often the mother would prevent casualties only by a timely swipe of her armored paw.

It was upon these first excursions that Gulo learned the grim limitations nature has put upon killers of his kidney. He saw that if his kind could not strike down the prey by stealth and at the first stroke, it was lost to him. Nature has so constructed the wolverene that he can not run down prey, else the game would be harried from the face of the earth. And as his appetite was triple that of other beasts, Gulo developed a cunning that fell little short of black magic.

As the Summer advanced, the game became scarce in the high country. One day Gulo learned the extremities to which voracity may drive his kind. He had followed his mother alone some three hundred yards up a rocky spine of the mountainside. Suddenly there was a movement against the skyline and Gulo saw a round bristly ball of a creature waddling slowly ahead of them. His mother saw it, too, and quickened her patent shuffle. It was Quills, the snuffly porcupine, strolling through the cathedral shades. Here was the most awkward proposition in the wilderness—a luscious morsel of meat but done up in an impregnable armor of needle-like spears.

The wildcat, the black bear and even the cougar, all give the porcupine a wide berth at any chance meeting. The wolverene alone has mastered this knotty little problem, as he has, in fact, every other dilemma of his world. Without an instant's hesitation the she-*carcajou* moved to the attack while Gulo watched.

Instantly the quill pig curled up into a compact ball, every spine erect, squeaking and snuffling in weird, gnome-like rage, wrinkling his strange old face.

He felt himself safe, not having learned the trickery of the glutton clan. Disregarding the rattling of a thousand barbed shafts, the attacker reached through the opening of frontal spines and raked the porcupine fiercely across the face. The porcupine's deadly tail lashed for a stroke, but another lightning flick sent him on his back.

The she-wolverene rushed in and two more ripping slashes of her powerful claws laid open the hedgehog's exposed belly, left him twitching in his death throes. The *carcajou* paid dearly for this, however, for a dozen fiery quills were left embedded in her paws and forelegs. Another creature having got thus far would have quit the scene to nurse his wounds in agony. Gulo's mother simply fell upon the kill, paying no heed to another score or more of deadly shafts which were driven into her neck and jaws.

The fresh warm meat was not to be resisted, and within a minute Gulo had joined her and was likewise tearing at the carcass. Soon his fat cheeks and black lips were likewise bristling with the flexible needles, but this physical agony was wholly secondary to the gnawing of a bottomless appetite. He fought the quills as he would have fought a living foe, snarling and clawing at them until a bloody froth dripped from his mouth, but like his mother he was not to be turned from the feed.

As he tore at the meat, quills broke off with every mouthful, burying themselves deep in the flesh, but he ground them down his gullet as he ate, with a stoicism unequaled by any other beast. For months Gulo and his mother would suffer from the broken shafts of the embedded quills which would work their way through their flesh to come out one by one at distant parts of their bodies, but to Gulo it was in no way a lesson. Throughout his life, when pressed by hunger, he would seek out a porcupine and repeat the agonizing feast again and again.

By Winter Gulo was almost as big and bulky as his mother and his iron hard sinews gave promise of an astonishing power at maturity, even for a wolverene. His coat had now darkened several shades from a dull dirty brown to sooty black, black as his own heart, except for two skunk-like bands of dull yellow along his sides. And after the manner of his kind, his coat was coarse and ragged and seemed ever in a state of molting. It was practically worthless in the fur markets, as his musky flesh was worthless as food. His sole use and purpose in life was that of a holder-in-check of the other breeds of the forest.

A sight of him as he slouched through the dim aisles of the evergreens quite filled this picture. He turned aside or hurried for no living thing in the high country now. His outlook on life was one of stark savagery. Young as he was, a wolf would have given him the trail. His black macabre mask and the reddish glow in his phlegmatic little eyes spelled one thing—*insatiable.*

For some time now, family relations had been strained among the gluttons. No wolverene remains in one locality long; their only permanent den is during the period of bringing forth young. Intense surliness and self-sufficiency had long been reaching the point of cleavage, which was in no wise alleviated by the scarcity of game in the region. Upon a day toward Spring the she-*carcajou* turned her head toward the north and departed over a high spur of the mountain without so much as a grunt or a backward look.

The three youngsters were not long in following her example. For two days they lingered on in the vicinity, then one by one struck off in different directions to roam the remainder of the Winter away. Gulo never set eyes on any of them again.

For many months thereafter he wandered almost constantly, living the nomad life of the weasel kind. He had none of the attachment to a permanent abode known to other beasts. He had no need of one. Practically immune to cold, he

could sleep wherever he chanced to tarry, even in the crotch of an ice sheathed forest tree.

A villainous assurance was expanding in him daily. Like the freebooter he was, he tarried nowhere, hurried for nothing. It is never he who is certain who hurries. But he wrapped his going about in mystery, for that was his nature, and he wrote his name in red across the hundreds of forest miles he traveled.

ABOUT two years later we find him a fully matured beast, established after the manner of a robber baron in a remote mountain fastness, a place which matched perfectly the grim ferocity of his nature. It was a wild and tumbling valley, an appalling rent in a mountainside that pitched downward in thousand foot ramps between gray rocks from the bare and cloud wreathed peaks above. Its lower stretches were darkly furred with spruce and pine; its entire length hung with the broad white ribbon of a boiling mountain stream, spangled here and there with bows and puffs where rainbow vapors marked the waterfalls.

Gulo had tarried here because of competition, and he lived for competition perhaps as much as he lived for eating. Few, he had learned, could face him in open combat, and in cunning none at all.

Nothing, I think, of specially evil import had been in the mind of Gulo on that November day when first he shambled up the valley's length. He was stalking rabbits—the finicking, long eared snowshoe rabbits of the foothills, when through the tranced late Fall silence, in which every little sound was magnified as in a cave, there came to him the sound of a big kill on the slopes above. Without hesitation Gulo headed upstream at his indescribable double shuffle, cutting the breeze—there wasn't any breeze really, but even on the stillest day there are air currents enough for a wet nosed animal to read, and Gulo's nose was second to no other creature's in wetness or keenness.

He climbed till the spruce gave way to a hog's mane of fir, and anon in a high open glade he came upon a great cougar, king of mountain slayers, crouched open mouthed and terrible in a setting of blood and death. Gulo took note of the great size of the killer, of the fresh killed deer upon which he was mounted, of the threat that spoke from the cougar's wrinkled, snarling mask and the cruel insensate eyes of gooseberry green, and for none of these things did he pause an instant.

In his nostrils was the warm blood scent; in his blood was that which brooked no master. The lion was a beast that could strike down a bull elk, and carry a slain deer for a mile, slung over his shoulder, but he had no stomach now for coming to grips with the squat beast that shambled toward him, though Gulo was scarcely a third his size. Seasoned in years and craft, the big cat had learned the devilish in-fighting tactics of the wolverene clan. He might vanquish Gulo in the end through superior size and strength, but the cost would be great; no definite victory would be his until the last flicker of life had gone from Gulo's body.

Therefore, he swore hideous and terrible threats under his bristling whiskers, but gave ground even as he swore, while Gulo continued to advance, purposeful, without pause. He did not swear, neither did he hasten, but there were more terrible things writ on his black and brutal visage than were in all the hissed curses in the feline tongue.

In the last ten feet of Gulo's approach, the cougar lifted up his voice. It was the voice of frustration itself, a malignant, appalling yell that belonged to the Lower Regions and went with an equally hideous grimace, as cowardice and desire came to deadlock in his brain. For just an instant at the last there was an unseemly chaos, as the cat slashed whistling, wicked slashes

with his great suggestive paws, like a groggy boxer frantically sparring thin air. Then he went, did the lion, ungracefully amid complete loss of temper, exploding in yells like a banshee at fifteen second intervals.

As for Gulo, he settled himself imperturbably to the stolen feast, watching the panther inscrutably out of sight as he tore strips from the haunch of the deer; nor did he stop until a whole hind quarter of the kill had disappeared. Then he dragged the remainder of the carcass away and hid it in a cranny in the rocks, certain that the vile smelling musk with which he "doctored" the meat would keep off all other prowlers, no matter how hungry they might be.

That was a beginning well designed to please Gulo with the valley. Within a week he met and worsted in a similar way the little band of four timber wolves who made the valley a part of their hunting range. The wolves had come upon Gulo at his feeding, and like the cougar had been frustrated by the wolverene's bottomless and impregnable assurance. Though they could have worsted him in the end, one or probably two would have died in so doing, and in the vital moments of bickering as to formation and attack they lost their morale and the battle.

In the two or three weeks following, Gulo lived on his glory, so to speak, and with due regard to the sensation he created. All weasels love to cut a figure, to know, as it were, the terror of their name, and frequent contact with the denizens of the valley kept Gulo's interest whetted. All that would soon have dwindled, however, and Gulo would have passed on, had he not met another enemy in the valley, fiercer than the cougar, crueler and more crafty than the wolves—one who challenged all his uncanny, nearly human nerve and cunning to survive.

Upon an afternoon as he prowled, a humped, squat, menacing shape in the dimness that lived beneath the drooping spruce boughs, he stopped very suddenly and sat down for no reason that any one saw or knew, including himself. In the latter part of the same instant, something broke off simultaneously the bone in Gulo's right foreleg and a spruce limb that hung down at his shoulder. The thing was a .318 copper capped rifle bullet, traveling just ahead of its own report and singing wickedly to itself. If Gulo had not squatted when he did, it would have drilled his heart.

Bullet and rifle belonged to Long Tom Handy, a settler who the year before had taken up the lower part of the spruce valley as a timber claim. It was Gulo's first introduction to man and the magazine rifle—his baptism of fire. Thereafter he removed into the scenery, not slowly, using black arts of effacement.

A mile away in a hidden spot a fearsome tableau was enacted. Gulo was having it out with the bullet that was still lodged in his foreleg, and showing his true colors, by the way. With blood smearing his chops, he raged and tore like a demon; he growled and gibbered and tore up the ground with saber-like claws; he lurched round in circles and chewed up dead branches. Finally he sought his secret den and doctored his injured leg for thirty-six hours. At the end of that time he issued forth upon a tour of deviltry that was to live long in the memory of the countryside, for nothing could have been more perfectly designed to hold him to the valley than that brush with Handy.

In the week or two of filibustering that followed, prompted doubtless by the devil his master, he did every conceivable harm he could to the valley and its dwellers, and particularly to Handy, who now stood for his special and composite enemy.

Handy himself had not been idle. A woodsman of sorts, he put in his Winter months along the trapline. He knew the ways of the wolverene and the strange life work of that ill omened beast which seems to be the paying off of an everlasting revenge upon trappers and hunters. So after vainly tracking

Gulo that first day, he set himself to the planting of traps and snares for the honor of his name and the mastery of the valley. He put art and zest in his work, but the wolverene, as we have said, is born a child of darkness, and his cunning and knowledge of evil increases with the years.

No animal on four legs has any conceivable right to understand the workings of every trap known to man, and it is wholly an insult that such an animal should be able to smell out and throw trap after trap in the dark of the night without injury to itself. Yet that is precisely what Gulo did to one after another of the springed horrors Handy laid for his reception, having the power to smell steel as most beasts might smell blood.

Likewise he dined sumptuously off the bait provided for his death. Handy swore, but withal his interest in the game was increased. He made solemn pact with himself to stretch the glutton's pelt before heavy snow came and changed his tactics to poison and deadfalls, bringing genius to bear in his work. He still reckoned without his host, however, for this was his first direct dealing with a wolverene.

The cleverest and most artful of all of Handy's sets served only as an object lesson. Moving one night through the treble welted darkness beneath the spruce—always slouching, and limping now in the bargain, his broken leg having shortened in the healing—Gulo again stopped dead in his tracks, stared ahead of him, stared behind, moved a step, then leaped eight feet as something whizzed down at him from overhead.

As he reached the ground he whirled about, teeth bared, but there was nothing to be seen. Only a heavy log that lay in the spot where he had been standing. He had sprung a fall trap such as is used for bear, and only some sixth sense of those who live outside the law had saved him.

Thereafter, Gulo knew, once and for all, that such as he were not allowed to make even one misstep and live. His caution accordingly was multiplied. For a week thereafter Handy saw nothing of him. But unknown to him Gulo dogged his footsteps daily. From a score of unguessed vantages his burning orbs had studied the man, his ways and the strange log den wherein he dwelt. To Gulo likewise the rivalry was becoming exciting, a game such as was dear to his heart.

BY THE end of the fourth week Handy had practically ceased operations along his trapline and was focalizing all his skill in compassing the death of the wolverene. Gulo, however, had become no more than a rumor, a nightmare, an elusive spook on four legs.

Handy was constantly aware of him like an evil thought, the marks of his handiwork were everywhere—trap after trap that lacked their two essential parts, the bait and the catch; other traps taken away and hidden beyond finding; marks everywhere where some creature had been violently done to death and eaten on the spot, but never a sight of the evil little genius who was working all the havoc.

Handy had heard many a woodsman's tale of the everlasting grudge of the wolverene tribe against trappers, but had never before credited them. Now he saw that until this robber was killed or driven off, his Winter's take of fur would be next to nothing. It had become very literally a feud between the man and the beast for the freedom of the valley.

For four full days, therefore, Handy concentrated all his energies in a relentless hunt for the life of Gulo. Trail after trail he followed to its hopeless extinction in some inaccessible spot amid rocks or blow-downs, hoping to discover the wolverene's permanent lair, but in vain. The reason was that Gulo dwelt at the bottom of an all but impassable gorge, in a rock cleft that was hidden beneath the enveloping mists of a fifty-

foot waterfall. He had come upon the place by chance in his first week in the valley, and neither human nor animal sagacity could ever have discovered the retreat.

White vapors hid the cleft itself, and the approach was down the precipitous rocks of the gorge walls, rocks washed free of all scent by constant showers of spray. Here Gulo passed the daylight hours, lulled by the ceaseless chatter of the falls, so much like the throb of those other waters he had known in his birthplace. Thus it was that on three different days he had awakened and glared forth through the water curtains that draped his doorway upon the form of Handy passing and repassing along the stream bed below. Knowing instinctively the object of Handy's quest, he lay low and took notes, so to speak, and upon the fourth day he sallied out and did a bit of tracking on his own.

He shadowed the man for a space to make sure he was well occupied in parts remote, then back tracking, he shambled away toward midday to visit Handy's cabin. He had a bit of work to do there by way of extending his sphere of influence. He craftily circled the cabin twice, then for a steady hour, with a patience and strength that were uncanny, applied himself to the heavy plank door. Exerting all his powers, he gnawed, wrenched and clawed until the wood was stained red from his bleeding gums. At last he gained access. When a half hour later he quit the cabin, he left behind him a scene of chaos and catastrophe.

Handy's small bale of furs had been maliciously torn open and its contents ruined; his sugar, flour and cornmeal supply had been scattered about and defiled past using; his bacon devoured and his frying pan gnawed and bent out of shape. Even the blankets had been dragged from his bunk and chewed and torn into strips and the few spare traps that had lain in a corner had been carried away and hidden in the forest past all finding. It was a deliberately planned and amazing insult worthy of the craftiest human spleen, yet Gulo was but an animal with an animal's intelligence.

To Handy it was the last straw. That any creature not human could foresee the acts of man and checkmate them in such a way was too much. After fifteen years of hunting and trapping the forest creatures for a living, he could scarce credit the fact that one of them had at last outmatched him in craft and courage and his wrath was tinged with an almost superstitious awe.

That very night he left for the distant settlements and two days later returned with four hunting dogs, among them two powerful liver-and-black beasts with grim records as leaders of a bear pack. With no preliminaries, Handy cast loose the four on Gulo's fresh trail. It was a showdown now between himself and the wolverene and he was running no more chances.

In his absence Gulo had been busy, very busy, about his usual affairs. He had visited the cabin once again and had gone up and down the trapline, making away with the bait and devouring or tearing to pieces every luckless animal he found in the traps, in a prolonged saturnalia of destruction. Fate, however, had definitely turned her face from him at last.

Upon the day in question he was abroad as usual in the late afternoon, slouching down the valley. He was searching for Handy. Having seen or heard nothing of the man for forty-eight hours, he was filled with curiosity to discover whether he had actually driven the enemy away. It was a blustering day with snow falling.

Far above him the north wind sang a romping song among the pine tops like the distant dirge of surf on a sandy shore. It was an ill wind, that—for Gulo. But for it he might have had ample warning of the hunt that was afoot. As it was, the chase was less than half a mile behind him before Gulo stopped suddenly, the coarse hair rising in a

roach along his back. A sharp but indefinable sense of danger had impressed his super-acute senses, even above the tumult of the storm, and abruptly he turned his course and began climbing toward the head of the valley.

In five minutes he was in full flight, humping his back like some giant measuring worm as he lengthened out in his peculiar gallop. He knew by then what kind of game was on by the bursts of cruel hound music that came to him down the wind. And for once in his life he was unprepared.

Actual alarm whipped him for perhaps the first time in his swashbuckling career, as he realized that the hounds were directly between him and his secret den. . . . Speed had never been his. And the hounds meant man! However, Gulo was nothing if not a gamester. His lips lifted in a thick defiant hiss.

The tumult of the chase grew momentarily louder and closer until abruptly the hounds burst into view as they crossed an open glade far to the rear. Desperate, Gulo made his stand in the branches of a leaning spruce, to fight for his life. Cold and deadly, his cunning was still working. Cornered hate was the outward showing of it, not a sign of a diffusing fear. He was playing the game.

With a crash the din of the chase broke and surged about the base of the tree. There was still the chance that no man was behind the dogs. If so, he might win yet. But the dogs were not alone. His luck had run out.

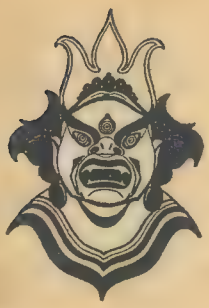
Four minutes later came another yell that pierced him through and through as Tom Handy came puffing up the slope on the track of the dogs. Ten yards away the man halted that he might view at close range this arch marauder. From out the shadows Gulo returned the gaze, black lips raised, inscrutable, indescribably malignant—and minus fear. The hounds leaped and bayed. Then the black shaft of a rifle barrel raised; there was a smashing report.

For fifteen seconds thereafter nothing happened. The grim beast in the tree neither winced nor acknowledged receipt of the bullet, yet Handy had not missed and knew it. Then Gulo stiffened throughout, drew himself to his full height and leaped straight out at the milling pack.

He grappled in mid-air with a single hound, secured a throat hold, locked his jaws—and died. And though the remainder of the pack tore him to pieces on the spot, Gulo never knew it, nor did it save the wounded hound. For Gulo's jaws had set like a vise, obeying even in death the last injunction of an implacable will.

Handy called the pack away and led them homeward, sunk in thought. Behind him as he went small dark specks already stood out against the snow as those feathered rats, the crows and the slate-gray Canada jays gathered to the feast.

They were the sextons come to bury Gulo, and their spades were their own black beaks.



Two Are Needed

By

JAMES W. BENNETT

UPON purchasing in China an exceedingly small second hand motor car—at a rousingly high price—I discovered that I was expected to add to the expense by hiring two Chinese chauffeurs. I balked. I said to myself rebelliously:

"It's just the infernal habit they have in this country of selling things in pairs. Lamps in pairs. Scrolls of poetry in pairs. Soap dishes in pairs. Now they're trying to foist on me chauffeurs in pairs!"

Besides, for a car as small and old as mine, two Chinese figures encased in a Winter uniform of six jackets, with huge gauntlets, looking more like animated push balls than human beings, would have been ridiculous. No! I would be my own chauffeur.

But the first week of my ownership, queer things happened. Either the car failed to start, or it stalled on the road without adequate reason.

Finally, the Chinese garagemen said significantly:

"Mebbeso, you catchee two drivahs. Then you no' have any more troub'."

I acknowledged defeat—in the end the foreigner in China always does! I hired the two drivers. They were found with suspicious celerity by my No. 1 boy. I recognized one of them as having been lurking in the offing during that period when I had run counter to public opinion by doing my own driving. Now my engine no longer stalled. Nor did the garageman have to come and bail water out of the "cahbulator". A plain case of sabotage!

I did make one last weak protest, however—

"But why must I have *two* drivers, boy?"

My servant smiled mysteriously.

"One not 'nough! You wait, mastah! You will see."

I soon did see, somewhat dimly. When we drove around sharp, masked corners, the second chauffeur would spring from his seat, run on ahead and—with loud curses—clear the road of sprawled beggars or Peking carts.

But it was not until Winter had ended and we were able to take the car into the countryside west of Peking, that my vision in regard to that assistant chauffeur improved.

A gentle, undulating hill lay before us, a hill barely noticeable except as a soft contour emerging from the millet-green Chihli plain. Under the hand of the No. 1 driver at the wheel, the car hesitated, coughed apologetically and stalled. There was a rasp of the emergency brake being hurriedly set. Out popped the second chauffeur. He scurried down the road, found two large stones and came panting back, to place them under the two rear wheels. The driver released the brakes, set his gears, and in low we climbed the rise. Eighteen more times that day the same tedious procedure was repeated.

But my case, I discovered, was not unique. In all China, there is no driver able to change gears on a hill without resorting to rocks under the wheel. A second chauffeur is more than a luxury—he is a vital necessity.

ABOVE *the* SHOALS

By GORDON CARROLL

TWO A. M. in August. At Facton, at Tundesley, at Gare Manor, at Norman's Lynn, the high angle guns flamed and banged and spat into the haze above, shredding the mist in search of the Zeppelins, homeward bound after a *strafe* over England. The raiders were up in the sky, all right, and the ground crews knew it. But the searchlights, long fingers of silver, poked into the clouds and then were lost in a diffused glare of their own making. One by one the German bombs came screaming down, some to land in the sea, some to scar the cliffs and fields, two to blow the naval airdrome flares into submission. For twenty miles along the east coast the sodden night vibrated.

The commander of the Mobile Anti-aircraft Brigade, R. N., reached for the

buzzing telephone at his elbow.

"Headquarters," he confided wearily to the mouthpiece.

"Tundesley gun," the other voice answered. "Three bombs to north, northwest, about two miles. No wind, but the clouds are low, very low. We sighted Zep in rift once, five thousand feet up, four thousand yards range. No. 1 gun couldn't bear—dead angle—but No. 2 got in five rounds. Can't say for results. Zeps now making east by south. Hazard a guess they're rendezvousing over Stoweloft Shoals, picking up the lightship beacon . . . Searchlights housed here . . . Got it? . . . Righto!"

The wire clicked off. The commander cursed softly. Blast the Huns! What value the beautiful guns, the skilful layers, when the Zeppelins hid in the clouds? Impudence, it was! And with impunity.

He reached for a pad and pencil, made a cryptic notation:

"Lightship. See."

Then he resumed his task of pinpricking the chart.

OLD STEBBIN, the lightship captain, sat within the confines of his deckhouse and listened to the *Stowe-Middle's* chains, long fathoms of specially toughened iron, creak to the continuous movement of the anchored hull. His vacant glance was fastened on the cabin's lone lamp which, hung from a bolthead, rocked to and fro in the idle manner of a pendulum.

Plentiful lines crossed the skipper's face, each a tiny furrow to mar the surface and make crisscross of the mahogany skin, weatherbeaten and toughened by the whip of the wind. Gray hair was tousled over his forehead; beneath heavy brows, slate eyes gazed unblinkingly; a mustache straggled downward on either side of his mouth, as if unable to decide where to end. His hands, extending beyond the cuffs of a worn serge jacket, were cracked and gnarled like old leather.

The only illumination in the cabin came from an open port, where the reflection of the early morning sun invaded to make flashing pattern on the walls.

Old Stebbin swallowed and transferred his gaze to the slip of paper before him. After an uncertain pause, his fingers grasped the pencil awkwardly and commenced to write:

> The Hon. J. S. T. Warain,
> Harbor Comm's'ner,
> Stoweloft,
> Dear Sir:
>
> I regret to report that *Stowe-Middle*, since the last visit of yr. inspector, has sprang a leak under the forefoot. Two plates are badly buckled. I further regret to state that *Stowe-Middle* is in general bad shape, and that further repairs are badly in need. In true fact, sir, I may say that *Stowe-Middle* needs replacing, so in such a case I would be glad to consult you about a new ship. *Stowe-Middle* is 32 yrs. old.
>
> Y'rs. respectfully,
> —ALBERT T. STEBBIN, CAPTAIN

He read the letter slowly through, nodding to himself the while. Then he sealed the envelop, arose from the table and stepped to the cabin door.

"Hey, you, Pottidge!" he called.

There was a shuffling movement beyond a corner of the deckhouse, and a man in cap and jersey appeared.

"Yes?" he responded.

Old Stebbin extended the envelop:

"Take the floating boat, man, and deliver this letter to Port House. Wait for an answer, though it be some hours."

"Aye," Pottidge replied.

He accepted the envelop and placed it in a hip pocket. Then he went below deck in search of jacket and gloves. Old Stebbin moved to the lightship's port bulwark and leaned one elbow upon it, allowing his gaze to wander outboard.

One mile due north Scully Island lay flat and brown upon the horizon, its southernmost tip reaching out into the shoals like a broken finger. A few trees were visible on the shore, and a cluster of deserted fishing huts along the beach. They squatted there, bleak and gaunt, pressed by the straggling dunes.

Beyond the *Stowe-Middle's* stern was the low rim of the English mainland, the five miles of water between ship and shore dotted with occasional whitecaps, curtsying above the treacherous sands. Toward the open sea were drifts of smoke from distant trawlers, while a bit inshore a merchant vessel cut the seascape in larger contrast, its funnel sending up a lazy mushroom of black.

Old Stebbin contemplated the view stolidly. It had been the same for thirty-two years, he reflected, save that the war had recently come along, sounding the iron note in an otherwise peaceful scene. Patrol boats had replaced the fishing fleet, trawlers were putting out to sea with mines and guns on their broad sterns, submarines had been reported off the estuary. And in the past two months, the Zeppelins had located the east coast, making the nights harsh with the rumble of bombs. Twice, in the early morning, Stebbin had glimpsed the cigar-like craft, scudding high in the dome of the sky like silver arrows, their motors drumming a note of terror. Right queer, it was! He spat over the bulwark, half in anger, half in disgust.

Old Stebbin had been captain of the *Stowe-Middle* for thirty-two years—a long stretch spent, with occasional relief, upon this frail iron dish, held to the shifting bottom by a pair of chains. The lightship was ninety feet in length, twenty-two in beam, and had a tonnage of one hundred and seventy-five. Her sides and topworks were painted red, with the name *Stowe-Middle* blocked on the hull in huge white letters. Rising amidships was a heavy mast that supported the main light, fed by oil from the heavy drums below deck. Year after year she rocked to the caprice of the North Sea—sometimes playful, more often furious. For a boat, she was cold, wet, cramped and amazingly uncomfortable. Yet she was old Stebbin's home. In a silent, shameless manner, he had loved her.

But then things of late had changed. The war's burden was felt in the lightship service. Most of the young men had been whisked away by the navy, leaving the older hands, and some few who had physical disabilities, to tend the lights. Of the older hands, Stebbin was one, and he had remained; meanwhile chewing the ends of his great mustache in growing doubt. Somehow, his pride had been hurt.

What with the navy and the coastal services demanding everything, little was left for the lightships.

Leaning upon the bulwark, Stebbin picked idly at the texture of his jacket. Two plates gone! Well, he had done his best. The letter to Port House was written; surely they would answer in hopeful manner. Old *Stowe-Middle* could not last forever. After thirty-two years neglect took toll rapidly. Perhaps a change of vessels would be for the best—say a two-hundred footer, with the new Hardin lights, fed by a compact generator set . . . Well?

ADAMS, the third member of the *Stowe-Middle's* crew, came up from below and leaned against the bulwark nearby, one hand cupping his weatherbeaten jaw. He, too, stared stolidly at the cool, green sea. Then he cleared his throat.

"Yon Pottidge, he will be back afore the day?"

"Aye," old Stebbin responded. "Afore sundown, I'm thinking."

A short silence, broken only by the soft wash of the waves along the hull. Then:

"Ye have told 'em about the plates?"

"Aye," the skipper said. He suddenly pounded the bulwark with one fist. "Aye, I have told 'em! But what is? The war, they will say—the ruddy war. All right, I say! But what of it? We be of a peaceful sort, the lightship. We be'n't a war vessel; we be more important than war vessels. Let the lightships go—then billy-o to yer navy fleets. But help us? My oath, no!"

Adams digested the harangue in silence, while the sun grew apace and

crossed his gaunt face.

"Yes," he finally vouchsafed. "It be the war."

"Ye be right, man," old Stebbin snapped. "But why haggle us? 'Cause we don't make a fight against the Hun, don't ease our bodies. Fighting be for the navy; lighting be for us. Both as has their places, mind ye, but I figger we do need good ships, too."

"Ye have written 'em afore." It was a statement, rather than a question.

"Oh, aye," the skipper grunted. "But they don't make half a reply. Supplies is scant, Captain, they say. You be lucky to have food and oil, is the gist. *Stowe-Middle's* a maiden, they make out."

"Ah, yes," Adams agreed at length. Then he moved off and vanished down the companionway. In a few moments the sound of the pump at work filled the hull, ejecting the water that had filtered through the weakened plates.

Stebbin's eyes fell to the *Stowe-Middle's* sides, streaked where the rust was busy. A touch of renewed anger flamed his seamed face. Himself and the ship! Two old ones they were, and neglected! Left to rot on the shoals. Reward of service? Oh, aye . . . and worse!

Suddenly, above the clank of the pump, Stebbin heard the exhaust of a marine motor. It was beyond the lightship's stern and he moved in that direction, taking a pair of binoculars from the deckhouse in passing. He focused them on the approaching craft. The twin circles of the glasses, sweeping over the silver foil of sea, picked out and held the launch, and the skipper rested his elbows on the aft bulwark to appraise the visitor from bow to stern.

H-r-rmph! An old navy hull, she was, converted from tender. The only thing shipshape about her was the seaman rating at the wheel; the other fellow in the white topped cap was too smart—too pink cheeked. From the mainland, he'd be. Navy noser. Gaw!

In the stern of the launch, Junior Lieutenant Ballard, R.N, returned the skipper's gaze with unassisted eyes. For the past ten minutes Ballard had been contemplating the lightship's silhouette, while all about, shimmering in silvery threads, the North Sea lay calm, at peace after four days of fog and heavy weather.

Forward in the launch bulked the shoulders of the seaman rating, pilot for the trip. The lieutenant, young and trim, was going out to board the *Stowe-Middle,* there to examine facilities for installing a telephone to provide communication with land. The Zeppelins had been active of late, and it was established that the captains of the Kaiser's air forces were using the lightship's beacon to make landfall on the east coast.

A bit of judicious observation from the *Stowe-Middle,* the commander of the mobile batteries ashore had suggested, might spell the margin of success for his gun layers. So Ballard was on his way to the shoals.

The seaman at the wheel, eyes fixed on the lightship ahead, suddenly spoke his thoughts.

"Right lonely ship, sor."

"Yes," Ballard replied.

Rather rum life, the lieutenant reflected, for those lightship fellows. Thankless task, endless monotony. Should sour a mind as quick as not. An occasional trip ashore would be a big event in a man's existence. Oh, well, perhaps with age, a lightship chap took things more philosophically . . .

Ballard resumed his study of the *Stowe-Middle's* queer, stumpy silhouette, with the topworks amidships, surmounted by a mast which bore a bulbous light. She looked for all the world like a bloated trawler, a mushroom sprung from her deckhouse. The old fellow hanging over her counter, with binoculars in hand, would be the *Stowe-Middle's* skipper. Sort of a facer he looked, one might say.

The launch drew closer to the larger vessel and Ballard stood up in the stern.

"Captain Stebbin?" he called.

The other nodded.

"Throw us a line, will you? We're

coming aboard."

Stebbin silently tossed a line out. The rating caught the rope, made it fast to the launch and pulled the small boat under the other's counter. While he fended the bow, Ballard climbed in.

The lieutenant pulled his long legs over the bulwark and confronted Stebbin, who had meanwhile retreated a few steps. Ballard smiled pleasantly.

"I'm Lieutenant Ballard of the navy com—"

The skipper's hand halted him in midflight:

"Yes, I know," he mumbled. "D'ye think I can no read yer cap?"

Ballard tried another tack:

"I've run out to see about installing a phone on *Stowe-Middle* so we can—"

He halted voluntarily this time, his firm lips half parted in the sunlight. A curious gleam had sprung into Stebbin's eyes, fed by sudden, consuming anger. It lingered there, like a smoldering ember.

"A phone, man? A phone, ye say? Who says?"

Ballard pulled a slip of paper from one jacket pocket and extended it to the tanned fingers. Old Stebbin pondered the written word. Then he glanced up sourly.

"Must be right. If Port House says so, so it be! Help yerself."

He made one wide, sweeping motion to the deck, and then stalked away, the picture of sullen indignation. He entered the cabin and the door banged shut behind him. Ballard was left with the deck to himself, and he rolled his eyes skyward in mock alarm. For the first time that day a tiny qualm entered his mind. Lord, he'd drawn a sweet one! Grouchy old beast, this lightship skipper. But what of it? He had work to do.

The rating made the launch fast and came up the ladder, stood on deck and gazed about with interested eyes. Ballard motioned him forward.

"Occupy yourself as best you can. I'll be here awhile."

"Yes, sor." The seaman moved toward the bow, selected a stanchion and sat thereon, meanwhile filling a pipe. Soon the rank fumes of the bowl swept the deck.

BALLARD stepped to the skipper's door and knocked on the weathered panels.

"Heh?" the querulous voice of Captain Stebbin responded.

"I'd like to talk to you for a couple of minutes, Captain," Ballard said. Silence for a short space. Then—

"What's holding ye?"

The lieutenant opened the door and moved within. It was a small cabin, perhaps fifteen feet square, and littered with the accumulation of Stebbin's life upon the shoals. A battered table covered with old papers lay against one wall, bits of rusted metal, fragments of rope, a broken hasp knife, a sheet of folded tarpaulin. On the cabin's side above were two faded lithographs depicting the glories of Victoria's day on the Mall.

Against another wall was a double tier of bunks, of which only the lower one bore signs of occupancy; the upper was filled with an assortment of boxes and packages. The floor was bare save for a tattered rug, which might have been of rope composition, or straw, or both. Three chairs were scattered about. Light came from the portholes, two being open, the others covered with a grayish filter.

Ballard swallowed. Quite homelike, he guessed it was, but oh, so rummagy! He measured the available floor space with his eyes, while Stebbin sat on the edge of the lower bunk, silent and moody.

"Sorry to disturb you, Captain," Ballard volunteered cheerily, "but I've got to arrange for a phone set. Must be sheltered and this cabin looks like the spot."

"H-r-rmph!"

It was going to be hard, Ballard reflected. He doffed his cap and wiped

his bronzed forehead with a handkerchief. Then he replaced the handkerchief and brushed his clipped mustache with one finger. Come on, he said to himself. Have to hold the upper hand!

"Can't be helped, Captain," he snapped. "War's war, and we're all put out, now and then."

"H-r-rmph!"

Ballard frowned, bit his lower lip and then turned his back upon his host, meanwhile moving closer to the table. He stretched out one hand, preparatory to brushing some of the litter to one side. At this Stebbin leaped to his feet, face flushed, his voice sounding like a saw going through a heavy board.

"Now, look here, young man," he roared. "Keep yer hands off my truck. I been living here since afore ye were born, and I don't be needing help now, as to how to set my things aright. I know my—"

Ballard spun about.

"Suppose you look here, Captain! I didn't come out to this boat of yours for a lark. I came out here to arrange for installation of a telephone set. Your boat just happens to be the right location. Nothing personal about it. I have the proper authority . . . If shore says a wire's going into this cabin, it's going! We're after the destruction of Zeppelins, not lightships. You're not going to be put out any more than necessary. You know it's wartime and—"

Old Stebbin raked his throat raucously, filling the cabin with the harsh sound.

"Aye, I know it be wartime, mister," he fired back. "I've a-known it for nigh two years. The lightship knows it, too. She's rotting from stem to stern account of ye smart fellers. Everything for the navy; nothing for us. Aye, I know all that."

Ballard stood aloof, not deigning to answer.

"Now ye want to put a wire aboard us. All right, go ahead! But it be'n't for the lightship, I tell ye! It be for yer blasted navy. Go ahead! Take the cabin, take my bunk, take the whole ship. And be damned to ye!"

Whereupon he jerked the cabin door open with a rough hand, stepped outside and banged the panels behind his retreating back, leaving Ballard to contemplate, with slight comfort, the inanimate brass of the knob. The lieutenant reached for his handkerchief again. Lord, oh Lord, what a charming old gentleman! Then he promptly removed such thoughts from his mind and turned to the brief task before him.

With a spool tape drawn from his pocket he measured the confines of the cabin. The table would do as it stood. The wires would have to lead in from the stern, through the side of the deckhouse, loop under a port, come to rest on the wooden boards. From out the port, Scully Island was visible off the beam. The phone, for observation purposes, could be hauled through the opening and out on to the deck. A fellow there could watch the skies, with the mouthpiece before his lips. A little rearranging of the rubbish in the cabin would set everything right. Ballard opened the door and stepped out into the day.

Up forward old Stebbin was hunched over the port bulwark, eyes fixed upon the water. His attitude bespoke injured feeling, sullen indignation. Yet all about the boat the sea sparkled in the sunlight. Ballard glanced upward into the blue of the sky. Odd, he thought, that that azure dome might, tonight, hold menacing shapes, long and silvery, each loaded with tons of high explosive. It wasn't right, it wasn't! Everything now seemed so peaceful. Blast the Zeppelins!

He called to the seaman.

"Come! We're going."

Out of the corner of one eye Ballard watched Stebbin. Not a movement to betray the other had heard his words. Broad shoulders still hunched immobile over the bulwark; eyes stared broodingly at the water below. Ballard raised his voice.

"We'll be starting first thing in the morning, Captain," he confided. "Ought to lay the wire fast. You'll be seeing us early."

Stebbin slowly turned his head until he had the lieutenant transfixed with bleak gaze.

"H-r-rmph!" he snorted. That was all.

Ballard smiled in spite of himself. Gad, what a grouch! Knew everything, of course! No one else had a look-in. Well, perhaps that's what a lightship did to a man. No helping it. He climbed down into the launch.

The seaman dropped the line, flipped the motor, and in a few moments the boat was heading back for the mainland. The lieutenant, seated in the stern, lighted a cigaret. Whew! The world was full of cheer, wasn't it?

POTTIDGE, in the skiff, returned to the *Stowe-Middle* in late afternoon. He put foot to the ladder and crawled upward with sullen mien; Port House had kept him waiting overlong, he thought. He handed the envelop to Stebbin, and the captain carried it to his cabin, there to read by the light from a port.

> In view of demands being made upon us for war supplies and equipment, we are unable to comply with your requests at the present. Docking work is out of the question, unless vessel is in sinking condition, which yours is not. You will have to carry on to the best of your ability, until the situation eases. Of course, we regret . . .

And so forth.

Old Stebbin slowly tore the paper into small pieces, let them flutter from his hands to the floor, where the fragments lay white and crisp against the dull planks. Then he opened the door, went forward to the bow and stood there, watching the light fade gradually in the west. Down in the hull, Pottidge gave Adams a hand with the pump. *Clank-clank-clank!* went the plunger.

Once Stebbin turned about and shook his fist in the direction of the mainland. Docking work was out of the question, eh? Aye! Unless vessel was in sinking condition, eh? Aye! And what condition did they think *Stowe-Middle* was in? Not sinking, no—as long as there were four sturdy arms to wield the pump. But what of general neglect, of bulging plates, of worn chains, of growing rust? Yes, what of it? Nothing!

Young whippersnappers in white caps, nosing about a man's cabin with talk of telephones. Cable going shoreward to carry a lot of chatter! And what for? Why, to spot the Zeppelins! The skipper smiled sourly.

Blast 'em, it would take more than a phone cable for that. He'd heard the Huns go over, hidden in the haze; twice he had glimpsed a ghostly shape in the heavens, streaking for the coast. Yet what good to see 'em? Guns and searchlights were needed, not boys babbling into phones.

Ballard was on the job early the next morning when the naval tender put out from Stoweloft with the cable drum on her stern. They dropped the armored wire overboard at a steady rate, taking care to lay it along the shallows where it could be retrieved in case of breakage or heavy weather. Ballard stood by the wheelhouse, while the engineer artificers manipulated the wire. The man at the helm gestured ahead at the *Stowe-Middle*.

"How'd you find the skipper, Lieutenant?" he asked.

Ballard shrugged:

"An old grouch, that fellow. Knows it all, he'll tell you, and thinks the navy's a barb in his back. Sort of feels he lives in a world apart, where the lightship service is all-powerful."

The man at the wheel threw back his head and laughed.

"Could 'a' told you that before, if you'd asked. These lightship men, they're all alike. Maybe we'd be the same if we lived their life."

Ballard nodded, and went aft to watch the operations.

By noon the sinuous cable was laid

and the tender was under the *Stowe-Middle's* counter. Ballard tossed his kit bag to the deck above and made up the ladder. Old Stebbin still leaned over the bulwark, as though he had not moved for twenty-four hours, and watched the scene morosely, offering neither help nor suggestion.

Ballard gave him a cheery "Good day," but the words fell in silence. Then the skipper grunted, while Ballard winked at the helmsman aboard the tender, as if to say:

"See? Didn't I tell you?"

The helmsman winked back. Oh, yes, he knew these lightship fellows!

An hour later Ballard brought the wires through the deckhouse and to the top of the cabin's lone table. The headphones and mouthpiece were attached, the buzzer box connected. Ballard stepped back and surveyed the job. Neat it was, and compact. He rubbed his hands together. But old Stebbin, who had been hovering about the door for fifteen minutes past, watching the work with stony eye, merely emitted a scornful grunt and moved along the forward deck, there to talk to the other two in the crew, the rumble of voices reaching Ballard's ears like the sound of breaking surf.

The lieutenant sighed. It was not going to be a cushy life out here! One against three, he was; navy versus the lightship service. Then he smiled grimly. They'd have to put up with him, and like it! No other course. But he longed, for a moment, to be back on shore. At least, a man there could do his work in peace. He lifted the telephone beside him, eager for the sound of a friendly voice at headquarters.

Before he hung up the voice had confided that shore had a tip—"just a tip"—that the Zeppelins were coming over that evening, weather permitting. Ballard felt a tingle in his veins. These tips were pretty trustworthy. A matter of directional radio and an observant eye or two in Holland. Seldom went wrong, unless the weather took a sudden turn for the worse late in the afternoon.

Ballard glanced out of the nearest port. Mist was gathering over the surface, giving promise of heavier weather by sundown. Already the sea rim was growing indistinct; the air coming through the opening had a moist touch.

He disconnected the telephone set and hung the instruments out the port, slacking the wire from the inside. Then he went on deck, set the phone upon a box, and took down the binoculars from the hook. If the Zeps came, he was ready to observe and pass the word along to shore for what it was worth.

Old Stebbin watched the transfer of the phone set from cabin to deck. He uttered no comment; instead he remained on the forward deck with his crew, and occasionally conversed in low tones. Ballard paid them slight attention. Once he heard the skipper laugh on a harsh note. Ballard gritted his teeth. Just let the Huns come over and he'd show this old man a thing or two! Let him see how the navy did its work! . . . The margin of success for the gun layers ashore? Yes, perhaps. He hoped so.

Supper was a silent meal. Stebbin mouthed his food in great gulps; Ballard hurried with his. Outside, beyond the ports, the day was dying quickly; and the mist was thickening. Ballard left his plate and went to the open deck, his cigaret smoldering pink in the twilight. He leaned against the stern bulwark and gazed shoreward, where only a twinkling light or two, showing through a rift in the haze, betrayed the position of the mainland. These were gleams which would be quickly doused, if the tell-tale drone in the skies materialized. A sudden blanket of darkness, like a giant's cloak, would cover the countryside.

Night came with startling rapidity. Over Ballard's head, weaving back and forth against the background of the sodden clouds, was the *Stowe-Middle's* mast light, yellow and red by turns, as the beams happened to catch his eye. The

anchor chains creaked gently to the motion of the sea. On the forward deck Stebbin resumed the rambling conversation with his men. Without warning, the phone buzzed angrily, the night split by its shrill insistency.

"Cruisers have picked them up," shore volunteered. "Forty miles out and heading in fast. Three or four, we think. Keep an eye!"

The wire clicked off.

Ballard fondled the binoculars. It was a bad night for spotting, he had to admit; but the ear and the eye, together, might bring results. There was supposed to be a faint moon in the sky, somewhere, but the low lying clouds hid the crescent. He squatted on deck and strained his ears to the night.

Ten minutes passed in silence. Then Ballard heard the skipper's heavy boots pounding aft on the deck. Soon the old man's figure loomed alongside him, and remained there, immovable, faintly illumined by the light from the port behind. Stebbin glanced from Ballard to the phone, then back again, then eyed the heavens.

"Gaw!" he snorted. "Why, man, what d'ye expect to do with them glasses. Pick out the stars, mebbe? I remind ye, it's guns ye need, not telephones. And ye can tell yer friends ashore I said so."

Stebbin moved away. Ballard heard the hint of a chuckle from the forward deck, where Pottidge and Adams stood, shrouded by the darkness. The lieutenant stuck out his chin with an involuntary movement.

FAINT at first, growing in volume like the sweep of a pipe organ, the drone of the Zeppelins began to fill the sky. Coming in from the sea the raiders were, and fast, confident of security. Hidden from the surface and shore by the clouds, they were raucous in their defiance. Ballard shook his fist toward the heavens and placed the mouthpiece before his lips. His night glasses began to rove the sky; his voice began to crackle into the wire.

"At least four, I'd say by the noise. Low, of course, to make the lightship . . . . Maybe three thousand feet . . . . Hold on, hold on! I'll pick 'em up soon! Just keep patient—they've slowed a bit, I'd say. Motors drumming like grouse . . . . They've got to wait, I tell you, to see the light."

The glasses moved back and forth across the sky. Ballard suddenly knew the feeling of the ground crews ashore when they could hear the Zeppelins, yet could not see. A maddening sensation it was. He visualized the Huns in his mind's eye. Four ghostly shapes, or more; riding the mist, moving about in the clouds like celestial fish, each marking the other's position, all looking for the telltale light of the *Stowe-Middle*. The Hun navigation was good, but not so good as to pass up making landfall. Harsh faced commanders, hanging at the windows of aluminum gondolas, peering earthward for the yellow gleam in the haze that would give them certain knowledge . . . .

Ballard allowed himself a faint smile. With all the wealth of scientific instrument, the Zeppelins were, in the final analysis, dependent on an oil lamp, rocked by the *Stowe-Middle's* ancient hull.

On the foredeck of the lightship Stebbin and crew leaned upon the bulwark in pointed silence. They heard snatches of Ballard's conversation, but paid it scant heed. The sound of the Maybach motors overhead filled the night, and their minds. Once Stebbin spat over the rail into the gloom and delivered himself succinctly.

"H-r-rmph!" he grumbled, and lapsed into calm again.

Pottidge, the silence broken, went slowly down the companionway to take a hand at the pump. Zeps or no, the *Stowe-Middle* had to keep bobbing. And that meant a man at the pumps. It was Pottidge's turn now; Adams had had the handle for an hour in the late

afternoon. The lightship was safe from the menace in the skies; the Hun needed her beacon.

Ballard gave a sudden start and rose to his feet. The clouds had parted for an instant, and in the rift he had glimpsed a grayish smudge.

"I've got one," he barked into the phone. "Three thousand feet, at best, and headed north-northwest. Twenty degrees, say . . . . Hell, it's gone again! Got it, got it? Three thousand feet, twenty degrees, N. N. W. Got it?"

From a quarter mile off the lightship's beam came a sudden noise, like that of heavy cloth ripping. It was a queer, rasping sound, and was plain above the sound of the Zeppelin motors. Ballard wondered—just for an instant.

"They're dumping ballast! More altitude, of course. They got our light, all right, all right. Figure them for yourselves. Twenty degrees, say, and five thousand feet. Righto!"

As the wire clicked, the horizon to shore was lighted by a wall of white—long silvery streamers that crisscrossed the sky like heavenly batons. Some of them passed through each other caressingly and went on their way. Others returned, as by affinity, and locked together, making a double shaft of light, broad and wavering, like a luminous satin ribbon. All across the sky, orange flashes flickered and spat out puff balls of smoke, lighted by the flame of the bursting powder. The first of the guns' reverberations reached the lightship and rocked across her, spread out into the waste of the sea. The shore barrage was up, lying across the Hun course, north-northwest from the *Stowe-Middle,* twenty degrees.

Ballard suddenly felt better. His glasses might have done the trick and laid the guns correctly. He stood erect and watched the bursting panorama along the east coast.

Stebbin and Adams walked aft, brushing past Ballard, and paused at the stern, there, too, to watch the scene, reminiscent of an orgy of fireworks. The whole sky was stabbed by flame, billowing, fading, flashing again. The skipper stared moodily at the flickering bursts. Then he turned about and approached Ballard.

"A fine show, mister," he grumbled. "A deal of money going up in smoke, I'd say. But they be'n't getting anything for the deal. I tell ye it's guns and lights ye're needing, out here. If I was a navy man, smart like ye, I'd be putting a gun on Scully Island. Yes, sir, on Scully Island, where ye could get a shot at the Hun afore he strikes the mainland. But, of course, I be'n't smart, see?"

Stebbin moved on in the darkness, and Ballard heard the cabin door open. Soon there were sounds of the skipper's making ready for the night; a chair scraped the floor; the springs in the lower bunk creaked. The lamp was turned down to a narrow wick. Ballard leaned against the deckhouse, scratched his chin, pondered the old man's words.

Maybe the skipper was right. Grouchy old lad might have put his finger on it. Funny that no one had thought of Scully Island before! But then, there was plenty to keep the batteries busy on the mainland. Yet it was an idea, right enough! A good one, providing that equipment could be brought across the tide race from shore to the island. And providing the ordnance surveyor would show a boat the safe pass through the mine fields.

ALONG the coast the guns were subsiding one by one as the Zeppelins eluded the barrage and swept inland, heading for London and the industrial centers en route. Ballard felt a pang of regret. He had been waiting for the arc of fire in the sky that spelled a Hun down, and none had come. Rather the heavens were bleak and gloomy, and the searchlights, after a last wavering sweep, blinked out. The sudden silence, in contrast to the rumble of the guns, smote the ears.

Adams left the stern and walked forward, his footsteps sounding muffled in the night. Ballard unswung his glasses, lighted a cigaret, hung it from one corner of his mouth and reached for the telephone again.

"Nothing doing, eh?" he confided to the other voice. "Yes—bad visibility. But you gave 'em a scare, all right. Huns must 'a' thought they scared up a bees' nest. I say, pass this on to the Old Man, will you? Lightship's skipper suggests a gun on Scully Island. Says it—"

The other end of the wire began to protest. Ballard cut in abruptly.

"Yes, I know all about the place. Swampy and foul, if you want to call it that. But I'm merely suggesting. Worth having a look-see about the island, I'd say. If there's footing over there, we might set a trap for the Boche. Y'know he never expects gunfire, barring ships, until he's over the coast. Get it?"

Headquarters got it. Ballard flipped his cigaret over the bulwark and watched the glow blink out on the surface. Then he settled back for a long watch—the hours before the Zeppelins came back and swung out over the sea on the homeward trip. But that night the raiders went southward, rendezvoused near Sandringham and passed out over the Wash. The *Stowe-Middle's* light gleamed unseen for landfall. And Ballard turned in as dawn was beginning to come over the ocean.

By eleven o'clock that morning, the day breaking clear, Ballard noted a naval tender putting out from the mainland and watched her progress with his glasses. Two miles offshore she turned sharply and headed for Scully Island, and Ballard knew she was taking headquarters men out to sound the possibility of a gun emplacement on the beach. The boat threaded its way through the inshore channel, proceeding cautiously, for mines were strung in solid lanes. But there were no mishaps; the tender grounded on the beach, due north of the lightship, and the men aboard stepped on to the sands, each human figure outlined clearly in the twin circles of Ballard's lenses.

The gunners were there on the beach for two hours, tramping hither and yon, disappearing behind the deserted huts, appearing again on the crest of a curling dune, seeking the spot that promised sufficient footing for an emplacement.

Stebbin came up from below and joined Ballard on the port side deck. For fifteen minutes not a word was spoken. Ballard applied himself to the glasses; the skipper scanned the shoreline in moody silence. When Stebbin finally spoke his voice seemed possessed of idle reflection.

"Now ye know, mister," he volunteered, "t'was once a spot ashore—not so far from that there big hut on the left—where a man could find the foundations of an old pier. Now, those fellers over there, they might be looking for a bit of solid ground, eh?"

Ballard admitted this was the fact.

"Well, that old pier might be it."

Ballard dropped the glasses to his chest—

"Why didn't you say so before?" he snapped.

Stebbin smiled faintly:

"Me telling a navy feller what to do, hey? No, sir! I be'n't a smart man. And besides, I ain't been asked."

The lieutenant had to confess this was true. While he was considering a suitable rejoinder, Stebbin resumed, his voice suddenly pleasant.

"I be thinking, mister," he confided, "that if a gun go ashore, over there on the island, there'd be no needing of yer telephone here, hey?"

"That I can't say, Captain," Ballard replied. "Shore's put this line aboard, and it'll stay until shore says no."

"Ah, yes," the skipper remarked, voice still pleasant. "I just be wondering."

He vanished down the companionway, whence, in a few minutes, came the sound of his voice, engaged in his interminable conversation with the crew. Ballard grimaced. Old fellow was set on

getting rid of the navy. Wanted to stay on the ship alone and grouse the rest of his life away.

For a short space, his mind encompassing the whole picture, Ballard felt a tinge of compassion for old Stebbin. Tough life, this! And, no doubt, the navy was interfering with the lightship service. But that was war for you. Everybody put out. Perhaps, skipper or no, the telephone would be taken away. Hardly seemed necessary with a gun emplacement on the island, if such was to be the case. And as for himself, the Lord knew he'd be glad to get on land once more.

He sighed, then picked up the glasses and resumed his study of the moving figures on the beach.

But the lightship telephone was not discontinued. Shore called that afternoon to say that headquarters was satisfied with suitability of the island. It seemed, headquarters said, that the Old Man had found the supports of an old pier near the beach, and at that spot the earth was firm. Transport was being arranged, and the first of the equipment would be ferried over with due haste. But headquarters wanted the telephone line to stay aboard *Stowe-Middle;* no telling when it might come in handy.

Ballard frowned as he hung up the receiver. Cheery news, what? Doomed to stay on this old tub for another turn, it seemed. Fellows ashore—lucky blighters—got all the best of it. He silently cursed the telephone for five minutes; then, feeling better, went out on deck to break the news to the skipper.

"Heh?" Stebbin rumbled. "Ye're to stay?" He gazed up at the sky with somber eye. "Gaw!" he snorted, and vanished, not to reappear until supper.

They ate in glowering silence, while Pottidge shoved the plates on to the table viciously. Ballard glanced at the server and growled to himself. No doubt about it; the skipper was making things hard. Pouring out his grievances to his crew; setting them against him, Ballard. Well, damn 'em, too! More than one could play at this game. From now on he'd keep his tongue—and do his share of the sulking. If the skipper wanted information, let him go ashore for it. And that was that!

There were no words spoken in the cabin that night. Ballard crawled into his bunk and lay there, angry and brooding, while all about the lightship a cold moon bathed the sea. No sound came from anywhere, except the gentle slap of the wash against the hull, the faint creaking of the ship's metal. Old Stebbin began to snore on his mattress; and in a few minutes Ballard's breathing joined. Only the light, high on the mast, showed life in the night; for the rest, the crew sulked in their quarters beneath the forward deck.

THREE days passed, cold and clear with the first snap of Fall. The work of setting the gun emplacement ashore went on apace, while Ballard watched operations through the glasses. He paid no attention to Stebbin or the other two; as an exponent of glumness, he outdid his taciturn host. No words passed; no thoughts. Ballard was determined that if there were to be unpleasantness, he would contribute his share. And he did so, with a finesse and enjoyment that surprised even himself.

On the third day Ballard went to the lightship's stern and began to pull in the boat that hung there on the line. The skipper appeared on deck and watched the operation intently. Ballard looped the rope and prepared for descent of the ladder.

"What ye doing, mister?" Stebbin snapped.

Ballard turned about and stared coolly at his interrogator.

"Going ashore," he vouchsafed, gesturing in the direction of Scully Island.

"Not in that boat, young feller!"

"No?" replied Ballard evenly, throwing one leg over the bulwark. Then he paused, half overside, half in.

"Y'know, Captain," he added, "I'm a naval officer. That supersedes you, in wartime. I'm going ashore in this boat, and you'll kindly keep your thoughts to yourself, as you might have done for all these days."

His foot hit the top rung and he commenced the downward passage. Above, one hand clenched on the deckhouse rail, Stebbin stood rooted, while a purplish flush overspread his features. His lips moved convulsively, his jaw muscles trembled, but no sound came forth. For a moment it seemed as if he would conquer his cholerie spasm and speak, forcing the words through clenched teeth. But instead, his shoulders suddenly sagged, the flush left his cheeks, and he turned around, walking slowly toward the cabin door.

In the skiff, Ballard watched the little drama intently; then smiled grimly to himself. Damned old grouch! Had it coming to him! Ballard set the oars and began the pull to Scully Island.

When he returned an hour before dusk, he had the gun emplacement firmly in his mind's eye. He had spent a bit of time on the beach surveying the position. The gunpit and dugout were cut deep into the earth, perhaps a hundred feet from high water mark. Beneath and round about were the tumbling concrete piers of what had once been a prosperous fishing quay. But now everything was abandoned, and the weather streaked cement was as bleak as the shore it adorned. There was no sound of life on the whole island except for the occasional clink of a workman's tool, or the cry of a wheeling gull.

The emplacement was shaped like a warped U. There was the entrance to the dugout, heavily sand-bagged, with the cable from the E. M. corrector to deflection indicator looped over the doorway. To the right was the altitude finder for observation post, and nearby the telephone to the same post.

Here and there was the rest of the equipment: telescope for angle of approach, the control center, vertical and horizontal telescopes, E. M. corrector, platform for the fuse puncher, and, finally, the glinting snout of the 75 mm. gun, poked high into the sky, as though alert for the foe that was not there, yet might appear at any moment.

One hundred yards from the eastern extremity of the emplacement was a Rolls truck, mounting the glistening searchlight. The wheels were chocked in the soft earth, and from the base of the light ran phone wires to the control center.

It was an efficient layout, Ballard admitted, and it might spell an unwelcome surprise for the Zeppelins on their next trip over. They would have no way of knowing that Scully Island, bleak and brown in the midst of the desolate shoals section, held a trim, blue muzzle, ready to bark at two seconds' notice. And a searchlight, eager to spot the gray gas bags, high in the heavens. Yes, sir, a surprise for the Boche!

Ballard again smiled to himself. Might be old Stebbin's suggestion, but it took the navy to put the menace ashore! It was a navy gun, manned by navy men!

Ballard pulled the skiff under the *Stowe-Middle's* counter and made her fast. He climbed over the bulwark to find the deck deserted. Then he entered the cabin. The light was dim—dusk was falling rapidly—and it was with difficulty he made out the shape of Stebbin, seated on the edge of the lower bunk. The skipper made no move at his approach; rather, he merely held his clenched fists before him and stared at the planking underfoot. For all the dim light, the old man seemed a disconsolate picture of defeated will. His shoulders had a pronounced droop; gray hair hung over his forehead.

Ballard felt a qualm enter his heart. Gad, if the old fellow would only do his part. Seemed a shame. Thirty-two years of solitude on an iron hulk. Embittered and embattled. Foolishly blamed his superiors, the navy, perhaps even the king. A shame, it was! Ballard cleared his throat, preparatory to

speaking. Maybe it was not too late; maybe he could make the old fellow understand, if he took the patience and time. But before he could form the words the phone box buzzed on an insistent note. Ballard strode across the narrow space and took the receiver.

"Ho, Ballard," the wire crackled with a note of pleased expectancy, "tip's just come through. Sure, too! Third Squadron sighted Zeps beyond the Wash. Six of 'em, they think, and moving right along. Weather bad there and thickening here every minute. Keep an eye peeled and watch the island gun. They'll need your checking. Y'know—ranging and timing. You're sitting at one point of the triangle."

Ballard hung up, pleased expectation, too, in his veins. The surprise would be sprung sooner than expected. The wire over on Scully Island would have the news. There'd be a bit of quick moving along the beach, getting things shipshape. Gad, if they could only bring a Hun down!

He turned about in the gloom and then pulled up short as his eyes fell on Stebbin. The old man hadn't moved a muscle; he was still staring at the tips of his boots. The pang returned to Ballard's thoughts, and he tried to make his voice pleasant, swallowing the pride that crawled into his throat.

"Well, Captain, the Zeps are coming again. Shore's got the tip. Six, they say. And maybe they won't get a warm welcome from the island, eh?"

The words fell on granite. A dead silence for a minute, and then the old man glanced up, sweeping Ballard's trim, slim figure in the fading light from the ports. He unclenched his heavy fists.

"Be they?" he mumbled in a lifeless tone, and arose. "Be they?" he repeated, and stepped through the door, out into the moist gloom of the night.

Ballard listened intently. Yes, the old fellow was moving forward, there to hang over the rail in brooding silence as was his wont. Ballard shrugged. Couldn't be helped; he'd done his best. Even swallowed the anger within him, the anger that had grown ever since he first set foot on *Stowe-Middle*. And his pride . . . He turned again to the telephone instruments, preparatory to moving them outside the cabin.

DUSK had fallen when Ballard drained the tea from his cup and stepped on to the deck, glasses in hand. The sky was leaden and thickening, though an occasional rift showed the lighter dome of the sky beyond the haze. Only the *Stowe-Middle's* bulbous light gleamed in the darkness.

Over on Scully Island the horizon was swallowed by the night. Shoreward, a few lights sputtered in the mist, as though they were candles caught in a rain. Ballard composed himself by the rail, loosened the glasses, placed his lips close to the mouthpiece. It was like the night of the last raid, except that the sea was a bit rougher, the sky more confining.

Twenty minutes passed in silence, broken only by the slap of the waves and an occasional echo of the crew's voice down the forward companionway. The pump had worked for two hours that afternoon, and now was stilled. Somewhere near the bow, only a vague shadow in the darkness, was Stebbin; but Ballard could barely make out the other's silhouette against the black of the forepeak. The *Stowe-Middle's* mast light shed its radiance above and out, not downward. And, as the globe rocked to and fro, and the anchor chains protested a bit more than usual, the sound of the Maybach motors began to take voice over the North Sea.

Ballard, more composed this second time, listened awhile before opening the wire. The drone of the Zeppelins was more pronounced than before, due to their increased numbers. Yet they seemed, too, to be at lower speed, as though the leading ships were hovering in the air, waiting for stragglers. Bal-

lard flipped the phone hook.

"Half a mile due east, I'd say," he reported. "Six, at least, to hear the motors. The island's got them, too, you say? Of course! A terrible racket they're making. But the mast light's up and they'll be heading for it. Sure, sure, keep the line open."

His glasses roved the sky. The Zeppelins were closer inshore, now, and the purr of the Maybachs was more strident. Here and there Ballard saw a lighter gray against the black of the heavens—vague rifts in the low hanging clouds. But no sign of a long, ghostly shape riding the mist. He sensed the impatience with which the island crew would be scanning the sky, fuming at their temporary impotence. Over the telephone wire he could hear faint scratching sounds—the noise of the men in headquarters moving about the desk.

Between the lightship and the island a gray streak in the clouds began to widen. Ballard glued his glasses to it, knowing it for a larger rift, behind which, by rights, a Zeppelin would pass at any moment. Suddenly a pinprick of light in the sky. Beyond it a pointed nose, like that of a giant snake. Then a glimpse of two hundred feet of the Zeppelin's outer casing. She was there!

The searchlight on Scully Island sprang into being with a searing white ribbon of brilliance, which knifed the sky and traversed the rift between the clouds. It fastened to the Hun raider and held there momentarily, like a cascade of phosphorescent matter falling from the airship itself. And as it hung tenaciously to the strip of target the gun flamed.

Ballard glimpsed the red shellburst in the sky, low and just beyond the Zeppelin's nose. He cursed grimly. Too short. Crew was impatient. The next burst was closer, and broke like a pink bloom in the searchlight's rays.

Then, with incredible swiftness, the nose of the Zeppelin tilted sharply, the riding light flicked out, and the gray monotony of the sky closed in. This time Ballard cursed loudly, his words reverberating against the side of the cabin. Damn 'em, on shore! They were too hasty. No excuse. . . . But before he could continue his fulminations, two events occurred rapidly.

On the island shore, where the frustrated searchlight groped and pawed at the haze, there was a frightful explosion. Ballard saw the dull red flame leap upward from the ground under a billowing cushion of black; tongues of fire, dulled and blurred by the mist, spread over the scene. The searchlight went out as abruptly as though the switch had been pulled. The Zeppelin, angered at the surprise party, had dropped a bomb where it would do most good. And the resulting blast had wrecked the light.

All this Ballard dimly sensed, but before he could arrange his thoughts after the startling upset, another explosion, louder and closer than the first, painted the night beyond the lightship's stern. It was a blast on the surface of the sea, perhaps a quarter of a mile away, and sounded like the landing of a dreadnaught's shell. There was little flame, but the reverberation of the explosive rippled the surface of the water and transmitted its impact through the waves into the metal hull of the *Stowe-Middle*. The telephone box jangled on the deck plates. Ballard snatched for the mouthpiece and pressed his lips close to it. But there was no sound or answer.

The second Hun bomb, dropped from another raider, had torn into the shoals, heaving skyward a curtain of mud and water. Inside the maelstrom were the tangled ends of what had been the shore wire. The telephone was as dead as the metal of which it was constructed. Ballard hurled the thing to the deck and stood erect, fuming with rage at the valueless instrument and blighting the luck of the German bombs. He grasped the rail and tried to straighten his thoughts.

Along the mainland the barrage was going up again—searchlight and high explosive. Ballard shook his head in the

darkness. No use. Night was too thick. The island gun had had its chance and muffed it. Nothing to do now but curse fate and the impatience of a gun layer. Had things been a shade different, right now a Zeppelin might be burning on the waves, its red halo spreading like an oil splotch. It was a shame.

He scanned the island shore again, intently, in search of a hopeful flicker of life from the gun crew; but there was no such sign. The searchlight had been snuffed out, instantly and completely, and perhaps with it the lives of half a dozen men. Those in the gunpit, protected by the bulwark of bags, no doubt had escaped. But what value the gun with its radiant finger gone?

BALLARD felt a sense of unrest grow upon him. The telephone, lying on the deck beside him, was lifeless. Shore would have noted this promptly. He could serve no further use on the lightship. If there were any help he could offer, that help was needed on Scully Island. There, perhaps, they sought an extra man; the Zeppelins would be returning later. A little luck, a break in the sky, and they might bag one. He should be moving.

In the interim between the last bomb explosion and this present decision to act, Ballard had moved to a world apart. Thoughts of the lightship, of her crew, of himself as a part of her being, had left his mind. It was not until he reached the lightship's stern, ready to depart, that the recollection of the other men about him returned. And then it was only the sound of old Stebbin's voice that made possible the fact; a voice that came out of the gloom, perhaps a dozen feet away.

"Where be ye going?" it inquired.

Ballard halted in his stride—

"Ashore," he answered curtly.

"I'll be going too," the skipper remarked in a matter-of-fact tone.

The spot of anger flamed again in Ballard's heart, then died as quickly. What difference did it make, after all? If the old fellow cared to see the havoc wrought by a Zeppelin bomb, why not? There was no time to argue.

"All right!" Ballard muttered, and pulled in the skiff.

Old Stebbin sat in the stern while Ballard, with vicious tugs at the oars, propelled the boat through the moist curtain of the night. Not a word was spoken. In fact, before many minutes had passed, Ballard forgot the other's presence. Only the bulk of the skipper's shoulders, hunched in front of him . . . And they, before long, melted in the blanket of darkness.

Ballard leaped from the boat as the bow scraped the beach, leaving the task of making her secure to Stebbin. He trotted along the sand, heading for the emplacement; for now he could see the gleam of portable lights, flickering in the hands of the gun crew. He stepped into the circle of illumination without warning. The battery commander stared up, startled.

"Oh, it's you, eh, Ballard?" he managed to say.

Ballard nodded:

"Saw things from the ship, I did," he vouchsafed. "Thought you might be needing a hand. That last bomb did for my phone. No use—"

The commander raised one hand:

"Yes, we saw it. Put the phone out, eh? Blighter's luck, I call it. Two bombs, and each does its business. Pretty good, I say."

Ballard agreed. The commander joined him and they walked past the gunpit, across a strip of wind blown grass, halted where the gleam of the artillery man's light showed a tangled welter of metal. To one side, under a blanket, were two figures, still with the immobility of death.

"The bomb," the commander volunteered, "landed over there." He pointed beyond the wreck of the Rolls truck. "Upblast caught these two poor fellows—and the light, too. Latter's out for the night, and maybe quite a bit

longer, I'd say. And damn it all, just when we needed it! The Boche will be coming back this way, I've a hunch."

They returned to the emplacement, where the gun crew sat about in disconsolate attitudes, bespeaking regret at the recent turn of events. To one side, his shoulders resting against the sandbags, stood the broad figure of old Stebbin. The commander gestured silently in that direction, nudging Ballard's elbow.

"Lightship captain," Ballard confided in a low voice.

"Oh," the other responded. "Sweet old chap, isn't he?"

Ballard smiled sourly—

"Rather," he said. Then they went down into the dugout for a cup of cheering tea and a talk over the wire to headquarters.

Shore, too, was disconsolate. The Zeppelins had gone over, six of them, hidden in the clouds. Lower than usual, they had been, scornful of the ground guns. But shore was also polite; no mention of why the Scully Island battery had failed to find a mark. The commander shrugged as he hung up the wire.

"They're smooth tonight," he ejaculated. "But I'll get my slating tomorrow. Whew! But the men were too impatient—too excited. Snapped at the range."

He arose from the chair abruptly, and Ballard followed him above ground, there to await the return of the raiders and to curse at their helplessness.

In all this time, old Stebbin, detached from the rest of the figures about the gun, had said not a word. He stood to one side, eyes wandering constantly about the emplacement. He noted the various gunnery instruments, the chests of ammunition, the graceful barrel of the gun, still pointed at an angle, its surface reflecting the dull glow of the electric lamps. Beyond the sandbags the ocean lay invisible. Still farther outshore the light of the *Stowe-Middle* burned peacefully, patiently, all but immovable in the faint roll of the vessel. There was no trace of the hull itself; but the eye could visualize the red plates, the squat deckhouse, the heavy mast which bore the globe.

Old Stebbin envisioned all this, and more. His glance roved from the gun to the *Stowe-Middle's* light; then back again, as though he were trying to connect the two in some manner. Finally he cleared his throat harshly and moved farther into the circle of light, confronting Ballard and the gunnery officer seated on a box. The skipper jerked his hand upward to the sky.

"Them Zeps," he said slowly, "they will be returning, hey?"

Ballard nodded.

"And ye ain't got no light to catch 'em?"

"No."

"Gaw! The navy!" The old man's voice faded away, as if tired of baring his thoughts. Then suddenly it resumed—

"How long afore they'll be coming back?"

It was the commander's turn to speak:

"No saying. Probably three hours."

"Aye," Stebbin responded, and strode back to his original position.

TWO hours passed, while the night wore on in increasing chill and somberness. Mists swept in from the sea, wraithlike tentacles, wrapping themselves about the men huddled in the emplacement, sending cold hands down into human marrow. Ballard pulled a blanket closer about his shoulders; the battery commander was all but lost in the upturned collar of his greatcoat. The rest of the crew looked like bundled beggars, clustering together for warmth. Only old Stebbin seemed unmindful of the night. He stood scornfully erect, facing the sea, the front of his jacket loosened, while his eyes, clear and unblinking, stared into the gloom offshore. He appeared to be a man lost in thought.

He turned his head suddenly and addressed the gunnery officer.

"Could I be borrowing one of yer lights for awhile?"

The other lifted his chin from the folds of the coat and nodded with a minimum of effort.

Stebbin stooped over, selected one of the battery boxes, placed it under an arm and strode out of the circle of light. His footsteps were quickly swallowed up in the darkness. The commander moved on the box.

"What's he up to?" he inquired of Ballard.

"Yes, what?" Ballard responded. They both turned and stared in the direction of the vanished man. They waited for perhaps five minutes, until the blink of the lamp showed on the beach, at about the spot where the *Stowe-Middle's* small boat was tied.

But it soon became evident that the lamp was not flickering in the manner of one carelessly carried in a man's swinging arm. Instead, it blinked in steady fashion—dots and dashes. Ballard grumbled.

"Old fool's probably signaling his crew to come ashore and get him.

"Oh!"

Soon there was an answering beam from the *Stowe-Middle*. The yellow pinpoint out there flickered, too, in regular fashion. Then it was doused; the conversation ended abruptly; and Ballard saw Stebbin's light returning to the emplacement, bobbing with the motion of the skipper's body.

The old man's face took shape in the illumination from the gunpit; a face with a set stare upon it, as though its owner had just passed through an emotional crisis. The eyes were hard fixed; the lips too. For a moment, as Stebbin passed in front of Ballard and the commander, it seemed as though he would speak. Then he evidently thought better of it, for he replaced the lamp with its mates on the earth, jammed his fists into his jacket pockets and resumed his immobile position by the sandbags.

Ballard was too cold and cramped to wonder at the skipper's actions; in fact, he muttered to himself, he was not frightfully interested. He would bless the day when he saw the last of the old man's face. He was tired of bickering, of growling, of smoldering rage; of the lightship, of her crew, of her cursed solitude. Maybe the old fellow was justified in his grousing, and all that, but for himself, he preferred the land. And he would see about transfer in the morning.

But at this juncture, ten miles away and on the mainland, a wavering searchlight split the night, and was soon joined by another. The phone in the dugout buzzed angrily. The commander jumped up, flexed his arms for a moment, and then scuttled down the dugout entrance. A third searchlight swept up into the heavens, closer to the island than the other two. The first rumble of the east coast guns came across the water, muffled by the heaviness of the night.

Ballard, too, leaped to his feet, in time to meet the commander emerging from the dugout, face lit with new hope.

"They're coming back, all right," he cried. "All six. Sandham got in a few shots but failed. Don't think *we've* got much chance, but we'll stand to. Damn that wrecked searchlight! The Hun will be nosey; knows we've got no illumination. Oh, hell!"

All about, the crew were springing into life, whipping their arms back and forth to stir circulation. The portable lamps on the earth were flipped off; a pocket flash, instead, gleamed here and there. In a moment, all thought of failure had fled; every man was suddenly confident of another shot—at least one—at the returning Zeppelins. Forgotten was the first fiasco, the lack of searchlight, the inability to see through the rifts in the cloud with unassisted eyes. It was enough to know the raiders were coming over. The gunpit was alive with expectancy.

Ballard found himself talking excitedly with the gunnery officer; exchanging heated words, suggesting this and that; hoping for a shot, telling how it must

be done. The chill of the night had vanished before the surging warmth of stirred blood. And in the midst of the rapid fire of words, old Stebbin deserted his post and advanced upon the two men, nearly forcing his body between them. All the while, the sky to the west was crisscrossed with beams, shedding a pale, ghostly glow over the scene. A stiffening breeze swept the salt smell of the sea across the emplacement.

"Now, see here," Stebbin said. "The Huns be coming back, hey? And ye have no light to see 'em. Ye'll be wanting a bit of illumination, I say, hey?"

Both men nodded at him dully, as though wondering at the sudden intrusion.

"Now, I be'n't a smart navy feller like ye two," the skipper went on, "but if I was—I be saying *if*—I could find me a light. Yes, I could."

Ballard discovered his voice.

"Where?"

Stebbin pointed offshore, to where the *Stowe-Middle's* mast light burned steadily. Ballard laughed; the commander, too. Ballard wondered for a moment if the old fellow's mind had gone; if the gnawing anger in his heart had touched him off. But there was no hint of insanity in the skipper's eyes. Instead, they gleamed with a look of clear intentness. Ballard's smile faded. He repeated—

"Where?"

The skipper's arm still pointed offshore:

"See that light, mister? Yes, hey? Well, below that light be five hundred gallon of crude oil. See? Now I be'n't a smart man, but I know crude oil will burn. And a smart man could figger, I say, how to light it."

A dawn of understanding came to his hearers at the same instant. Ballard turned his head and stared into the commander's face. The other nodded, like a man in a trance.

"Why, it's—" he commenced, but Ballard broke in.

"The ship's crew?" he cried.

Not a line in Stebbin's face softened:

"They be ashore by now, I guess. I signaled 'em an hour back."

Ballard grasped the commander's shoulder with penetrating force:

"He's hit it, I tell you! Long chance, but better than none! Worth a try, what? Say!"

They transferred their glance from the skipper to the sky. Above the mainland's coast a string of pink fireflies flitted in the clouds, each a bursting shell to flame and scream at the invaders. The searchlights, now turned on full, swung back and forth against the heavens, probing here, knifing there, in search of prey. The steady beat of the mobile batteries, firing at will—and desperately—filled the void.

Above the sound, the phone buzzed again in the dugout. But neither man paid it the slightest attention; their thoughts were elsewhere. Already their ears had caught the first faint drone of the approaching Zeppelins.

Ballard pounded the palm of one hand.

"The Hun will be coming through slow," he cried. "Knows our light's out; feels safe as hell. I figger they'll be low, and hanging back until all rendezvous out there." He pointed in the direction of the lightship. "We'll take it slow, too, eh?"

But the commander was already on the gun platform, while a gunner spun one of the glinting wheels and brought the barrel to horizontal position. The nose came down smoothly, gracefully, showing dull in the faint light, as though proud of its menacing strength. Slowly the platform itself turned until the barrel bore on a line with the *Stowe-Middle's* light. A handler passed up the explosive shells; they were racked by the gun's base. The commander held the gunner's arm tightly.

"Now, man, when I tell you to fire, fire at the ship's light. You've got the range; you've seen the boat. Light fifty feet above deck, amidships. Got it?"

"Yes, sor," the gunner replied confi-

dently. He knew the lightship, all right! He'd seen her lying out there for three days. But hit her at night, firing blind? Well, sor, he didn't know. But he'd do his best, him and the crew . . . He patted the breech with a fond touch.

The Zeppelins were passing over the mainland at high altitude, tilting sharply downward as they left the coast guns behind, seeking the yellow beacon on the shoals that spelled position for them. The night was thick, but with only a faint wind above the sea; no gales to blow the Zeppelins hither and yon, scatter them before the trip was safely done. It was the gales and stormy weather that the Hun commanders feared; the east coast batteries were merely a nuisance, to be cursed with German expletives and then left to their impotent barking and chattering.

BALLARD stood by the commander's shoulder, straining his eyes and ears at the night. The sky was filling with the drone of the Maybachs, rising and falling, fading and growing, like the sound of a gigantic saw splintering wood. The Zeppelins were swinging over the tip of Scully Island, then turning south in a wide arc, searching for the beacon. The commander placed a whistle between his lips.

Somewhere above, one of the raiders was dropping fast. Her motor banks sounded above the rest, saturated the air with rhythmic vibrations, pounded and tore at human eardrums. Ballard's fingers closed, unconsciously, on the commander's arm.

"Two thousand feet, I'd say," he whispered harshly. The commander nodded. The whistle skirled.

Instantly, above and to the right of them, the island gun whipped into life. A jagged streak of fire left its muzzle, the reverberation deafened, the barrel quivered and recoiled. The long, slim shell, designed for altitude flight, left the gun on a high, piercing shriek. Hardly had the flame died when another took its place, and another, and another.

But offshore, where the *Stowe-Middle* rocked in the ground swell, nothing happened. There were a few pinpoints of fire, a rippling burst of detonation, as the shells struck; yet no sign to tell if the vessel were hit, or if the water itself were taking the force of the explosions. There was no indication; only the dull flame of the powder. Ballard groaned. Lord, were they going to miss this, too?

Not two thousand feet up, the Zeppelin leader was hovering, confident of security. There was no reflection below, nothing to throw the raider's huge sides into relief against the darker dome of the sky.

Five more shells left the gun in rapid succession, and then Ballard felt the commander's muscle tense. His own, too, trembled suddenly. For where there had been but one gleam of light in proximity to the *Stowe-Middle*, there were now two, and one was pinkish and spreading. It grew rapidly, like a splotch of molten metal.

Without warning, a muffled burst of flame leaped from the vessel into the night, and shot upward in long, spiraling tongues of fire. The *Stowe-Middle's* mast light was lost in the sudden spray of illumination; the climbing flames passed it, enveloped its now faint gleam, strove to reach the top of the sky. All over the sea the pallor of light spread, folded back on itself, towered into the mists, giving illumination as penetrating as the break of dawn. The burning oil, wherever it struck the surface of the water, lapped outward with frenzied speed, seeking to ease the tension of its fiery surface.

At the fringe of the low lying clouds the Zeppelin was caught by the glare. German hands moved instruments with compelling rapidity; there were sounds of ballast striking the sea, the longitudinal fins on the Hun's stern slanted sharply. But precious seconds were occupied with these maneuvers, and in that time the muzzle of the island gun had lifted as if by magic.

The commander leaped behind the platform, Ballard following, and there the two heard the screaming projectiles leave the gun, streaking upward with the same speed with which they had just traversed the contour of the sea line. Ballard found himself shouting crazily into the night.

"I say, I say, we've got her! Can't miss! She can't get away. Quick, I say! Give it to her!"

But the gun crew was giving it to her, without power of suggestion. She was a fair target, three thousand feet up and eight thousand feet range. And yet every moment the powerful Maybachs were taking the Zeppelin upward and away, propellers lashing at the air to find the safety of the high reaches. And below, the oil flared, showing the raider's shape in ghostly, vaporous outline against the dark sky.

A sudden cry came from one of the men on the gun platform and, as if by magic agreement, a momentary silence fell over the emplacement. In the far distance, nearly two miles out to sea, a small, blue-looking flame had appeared in the sky. As a dozen pairs of eyes watched it with frozen stare, it rapidly increased in size and turned more yellow, falling slantwise and with accelerating speed as the flame grew, till at last it appeared a ball of stabbing lights and billowing smoke, streaking perpendicularly into the sea. Out of the midst of the awful glare came the faint sound of popping firecrackers—ammunition and small bombs exploded by the heat. And from the fringes of the conflagration, dark objects and débris fell swiftly, more swiftly than the hulk of the flaming mass.

The combined glare of the burning Zeppelin and the blazing oil lighted the island's shore with fantastic color, throwing into relief the hard faces, the tense lips, the straining bodies of the men about the gun. Even while they stared, the Zeppelin struck the surface, crumpled, flickered and then was no more; and tense lips parted in a sigh. The enthusiasm of the kill that runs high in hunters, was held to close bounds by the terrible grandeur of the scene. And beyond the layer of clouds, the five remaining Zeppelins clustered together, then strung out in line and headed for home.

Ballard felt as though he had been standing by the gun for an eternity, yet hardly ten minutes had passed since the first shot was fired. As the sound of the men's voices, suddenly released, babbled about him, in pride and horror mixed, Ballard remembered old Stebbin —realized that he was not among those clustered on the platform. He wondered silently for a moment; then stepped down to the earth. His eye had caught a light burning in the dugout, and toward it he made his way, leaving the voices behind.

Down in the dugout, Stebbin sat at the commander's table, a piece of paper before him, a pencil in one hand. His brows were close knit, and he seemed to be seeking, in the faint light, for thoughts that were elusive. Finally the pencil commenced to move.

The Hon. J. S. T. Warain,
Harbor Comm's'ner,
Stoweloft,
Dear Sir:

I regret to report that since my last letter to you, *Stowe-Middle* has sank, that is, in a matter of action, of which you will hear more about from others than myself. It might be said she was taken over by the navy. So in that case—

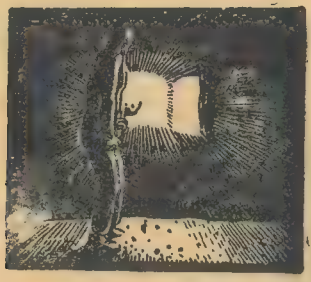
Old Stebbin glanced up from the paper as a sound at the entrance to the dugout distracted him. There at the door was Ballard's face, tan of cheek, blue eyed. The skipper looked at the younger man for a moment, then glanced away and cleared his throat.

"H-r-rmph!" he ejaculated. He regained the pencil, commenced to write again.

. . . . so in that case, I would be glad to consult you about a new ship. *Stowe-Middle* was 32 yrs. old.

Y'rs. respectfully,
—ALBERT T. STEBBIN, CAPTAIN

A Fantasy of Steel



By HARRY KEMP

OPEN hearth and Bessemer furnace set the growing dark on fire;
Shapes of crimson travel surely; eager magnets fail to tire,
While they bosom amorous iron that must fuse and be reborn
Into base and superstructure of new cities kissing morn,
Into slim and clinging girders! Traveling cranes walk to and fro,
Clutching bodies made of lightning; scarlet fusions leap and glow.
Gouts of spilling earthquake revel; laboring flatcars chant with weight,
Bearing forth the giant sinews of an adamant-founded State!
Magyar, Yankee, Irish, English, Swede and German hurry in
At the beckoning of the mill gates; Czech and Slovak, Hun and Finn
Tip the ladle, feed the furnace, guide the black electric crane
While the red hearths scatter planets, while the lightnings flash and wane.
From the night shift to the day shift, to red-caverned dusk again,
All the forges of creation roaring ere the birth of men
Wake anew, at human bidding; from the thunder, flame and grime
Men are building by their labor structures of the Golden Prime . . .
Like a furnace, blasting upward near a city like a hill,
Spreads the sunset, fit companion to each lurid-waking mill;
Through a chasmed bulk of buildings gleams its ragged edge of flame:
Dusk abounds with violent beauty that the darkness can not tame. . . .
While the statesmen grope and blunder, while the talkers say their say,
Steel has shaped the Super-Nation; Labor lights the promised way!

SOUTH WIND

By WILLIAM CORCORAN

THE rover had traveled northward with the Spring, touched the Republican in Nebraska with early Summer, and now he rode back alone southward over the Solomon and the Smoky Hill as the long hot days cured the prairie grasses on the stem. Day was done, and his face was toward the west. He sang as he rode, and his eyes, blue and wrinkled at the corners, attentively watched the wagon on the converging trail.

The clear air was fragrant with the smell of cooling earth and grass, and the sky was an oriflamme of color, from burnished bronze to blue. The rover had sighted the wagon a mile to northward, and it held his attention because of the little patch of bright red gingham on the seat. The rover smiled and slowed his sorrel to an unhurried walk.

When the wagon reached the fork in the trails, the man on the seat, a dry, lean granger in homespun, squinted suspiciously at the rover. The rather pretty girl in red gingham and poke bonnet sat erect and staring, her hands folded on her lap.

The rover saluted with his quirt.

"Howdy, folks," he said blandly.

"Mind a little company? And do I correctly presume that Carthage is the destination?"

"Reckon so," the driver admitted. "Far to go?"

"Not to speak of, stranger. You'll be in before dark right handily. Acquainted there?"

"Not specially," said the driver. He hesitated. "How is conditions in Carthage now? Settled any?"

The horseman's gaze went to the granger in appraisal.

"Not to judge by all I been hearing this Summer," he replied. "It's a hell town to ride into with open eyes. It ain't a town to be recommended to take a woman into. You settling hereabouts?"

The man's eyes shifted.

"Just looking around," he said. "Ain't made up my mind. Room to be choosey out here, I reckon."

"Room and to spare," said the horseman. "There's a thousand worthless miles of it scattered all around."

When the grays got under way, the rover swung his mount boldly about the tail of the wagon and took a position beside the girl. The girl looked up, and then suddenly colored and looked away over the prairie. A corner of her mouth quivered, but she suppressed the smile and set her small chin firmly. The rover hummed a tune and rolled a cigaret. Presently he spoke in a soft vowveled, lazy drawl.

She looked at him beneath dark lashes. There was deference in his voice and flattering attention in his eyes. The rover laughed. Soon they were chatting easily. The old man ignored them, driving on, squinting into the red-gold haze on the western horizon.

Carthage town, the cattle trading center for half a continent, was a giant's load of packing cases dumped on the quickening Kansas prairie. The lively nerve center of Carthage itself, where Texas cowmen fraternized with commission men and the freighters fought the railroaders, was the broad, dusty plaza before the depot. And the porch of the express company office, midway along the plaza on Front Street and proportioned so that a tall man might tilt his chair against the wall and rest his feet on the railing, in turn dominated the plaza.

In consequence, Sheriff Russ Tyler found it possible to rule his turbulent domain with passable efficiency over long periods of time merely by occupying a horizontal position on the express office porch and keeping an eye on things. Sheriff Tyler was tall and saturnine, and his gaze could be as opaque and expressionless as the stare of a fossil fish. He was a nerveless peace officer who presided over his jurisdiction with the minimum of effort that is the maximum of effect. The law was simple and direct in Canton County.

In this twilight, Russ Tyler studied the immigrant wagon rolling up the street, and he took particular note of the rover riding alongside. He catalogued the colorless driver quickly as a land grubber, hell-bent for settling on the dry prairie and working himself to a shadow getting a foothold on the worthless land. The girl was kin to him; young, seventeen maybe, clear headed but dangerously ignorant for this raw country. The gear piled in the wagon was familiar—plow, tools, grub, household goods.

Not so quickly did the sheriff make up his mind about the rider accompanying the wagon. Texas, twenty-five or so, handsome devil, knew his way about and traveled at his own sweet will. No kin of theirs. He and the girl were too bright and sparkling. Something curious about this layout. Russ Tylor studied the rider's face carefully.

The wagon halted opposite the express office. The young man urged them to continue up the street. He was pointing in that direction and talking.

Watching them, Russ Tyler experienced a tingling recognition. Certain images surged up out of memory and stood clear. With no change of expres-

sion other than a slight hardening about the eyes, he lowered his feet from the rail and strolled across the street. He circled the wagon and came to a halt near the horseman, to look up at him dourly. He spoke, and his voice was low and dry.

"Howdy, Kid," he drawled.

THE rider went abruptly still, and then swung about in the saddle with a swiftness that was sinister. His right hand, smoothly and with no suggestion of dramatic gesture, fell to his side and the fingers curled about the ivory butt of his gun. He stared at the tall, saturnine figure of the sheriff. Then he laughed easily, pleasantly, and his right hand moved onward to find tobacco sack and papers for the manufacture of a cigaret.

"Well, Russ Tyler!" he said. "I done heard about you setting up for a sheriff up here. Son of a gun! If it ain't been a coon's age since I laid eyes on you!"

"Thereabouts, Kid," said Tyler dryly. "El Paso last, if I recollect." He glanced at the wagon. "Going in for farming this season?"

"Reckon not, Russ," said the Kid. "I'm afraid it's too late by quite a little to lead me to righteousness behind a plow. These folks are friends of mine just pulling into town. Ma'am," he said to the girl, "meet Russ Tyler, sheriff of Canton County. Russ, this young lady and her father are thinking of settling hereabouts. We all met at the forks outside town and rode in together. I just now been outlining the superior advantages of Ben Tyron's livery establishment."

The old settler spoke up aggrievedly.

"I figured on going on after a little and camping on the prairie. I reckon I can feed my horses and look after my own well enough."

Russ Tyler smiled a faint smile.

"Reckon you'll be better off, stranger, if you do as the Kid suggests. You and yours will be safe in the livery yard. The town's full of irresponsible cattle hands in off the Texas trail right now."

The man looked dubiously at the officer, and slowly nodded.

"All right if you say so," he surrendered. "But I don't hanker to spend good money stabling horses this season of the year. If I can settle some business I'm getting right along." He shook the reins impatiently, and the wagon lurched forward.

The rider made as if to accompany the wagon, but the sheriff remained in the way.

"I want to talk to you, Kid," he said, his voice hard and significant.

The Kid hesitated, hot eyed yet on his guard. The girl looked at them over her shoulder, uncertain and uneasy. Russ Tyler stood fast. The Kid was furious, but he refrained from disputing the sheriff's command. He doffed his hat and managed a smile.

"So long, ma'am," he called. "I reckon I might be seeing you later on."

"Come and look us up," the girl said impulsively, half in invitation, half in query.

"I sure will," he told her.

She smiled, somewhat reassured, glanced uncertainly at the sheriff's unreadable countenance, and then faced forward. Her parent grunted his distrust and disapproval. He had not missed the sheriff's stratagem, and his suspicions were now confirmed.

The Kid slid deliberately from the saddle to confront the sheriff. His eyes were ugly.

"Well, Russ," he said, "what's this mean?"

"It's simple enough, Kid," replied the officer. His voice was cool and held no special enmity. "That pair of innocents looked to me like they might have strayed into deep water. I reckon I'd let them out easy-like without wetting their feathers."

The Kid looked at him.

"You mean I ain't fit to associate with them?"

"No," drawled Tyler. "The contrary.

I don't judge them as quite up to associating with you."

The Kid's jaw set.

"Look here, Tyler. Maybe I ain't a gilded angel. But I never yet been a tout. I don't want anything from that granger, and he ain't got enough to interest me if I did."

Russ Tyler was skeptical.

"He's got something so almighty interesting, Kid, that you forgot to look behind you when I came walking up."

"What's that?"

"The girl, Kid, the girl. D'you reckon my eyes've gone back on me?" The sheriff's smile was insinuating. "She's a right pretty piece, ain't she? And too young to be very smart. Watch out, Sabine."

"The girl?" said the Kid. His face was red, then it went white. The officer observed, and he spoke sharply.

"You're no angel, Mister Sabine Kid, and that's a fact," he said. "You've raised your share of hell and then some, and I'm here to acknowledge it. I never had any personal dealings with you, never had any reason to buck any play of yours, but you sort of made a name for yourself down along the Border. You're a smooth gent with the women and a bad'n with the men. Well, play with your own kind and take the consequences, boy, and I'm leaving you alone. Otherwise I'm riding you."

"You got no call to talk to me, Tyler," said the Kid. "What I done I reckon will compare with all you or anybody else done on the Border."

"These are orders," snapped Tyler. "You're a bad man, maybe, but so am I—and I'm sheriff. Stay away from that girl. Keep that skittish gun hand of yours quiet. Walk on your own side of the street. You got your orders—I'm watching to see you 'bide by them. Understand?"

The Sabine Kid understood only too well. His nostrils quivered with passion. He stared at Tyler for a moment. Then he snapped his cigaret into the road, turned without a word and, mounting, sent his horse headlong over the plaza at a reckless run.

Sheriff Russ Tyler smiled a thoughtful, humorless smile as he watched the Kid disappear among the crowded wagons and animals. Then he spat into the dust and returned to the express company porch.

DAY fled and darkness fell over the wasteland. The prairie brooded in the night, and its sentient spirit moved invisibly on the winds of a thousand miles. It moved over Carthage, and the town quickened and was awake. And awakening, it roared with a sound of laughter and music and tread of feet and the tinkling of many glasses, and its roar was a challenge hurled over the land.

The Sabine Kid, after tying his sorrel to the hitch rail, strode into the crowded barroom of the Happy Days Saloon. The Happy Days was one of the show places of Carthage; all along one wall of the great room ran the bar, resplendent with mirrors and gleaming glassware, while the opposite wall was a backdrop for an elaborate layout of gaming tables.

The Sabine Kid thrust his way to the bar and ordered a whisky. He was in a quiet, smoldering mood. The bartender placed the bottle before him.

"Hello, Kid," he said. "In off the trail?"

"Yeah, and bound for home," said the Kid. He downed his drink and added, "I'll have another. I reckon I need it. The weather in this town is kind of chill."

The barkeep made no comment. He gave the rover a look of covert appraisal and tended to the wants of another patron. Then, returning, he said—

"There's an open game getting under way in one of the back rooms, Kid."

"Let them keep their money. I ain't interested."

"Lon and Stan Durkin are sitting in," the bartender added. "I thought you might like to know."

Interest flickered in the Kid's eyes.

"The Durkin brothers, eh?" He smiled without humor. "It's been quite awhile. Maybe they'd like a little revenge."

The barkeep smiled and winked and was gone.

The rover finished his drink and left the bar. He strode through the crowd to the rear of the big room. Three doors at the back led into as many rooms reserved for players who desired privacy. The middle one of the three doors was closed. The Kid turned the knob and admitted himself without formality.

Five men sat about a round table, the green baize surface of which was flooded with light from a low-swung oil lamp. Table and chairs were the only furnishings; at the back a door led to the rear hall. Two of the men were markedly alike in great, sprawling bodies and heavy, emotionless faces; they were types of ruthlessness, dark eyed and dominant, well groomed and arrogant. Guns were evident beneath their arms in shoulder holsters. They and the Kid exchanged guarded, formal nods of greeting. Two of the others were nondescript. The fifth and last gave the Kid pause, and caused him to withdraw silently into the shadows. He said not a word. The game went on.

The fifth player, fumbling and bleared of sight from the unaccustomed impact of powerful frontier liquor, was the old settler, and on the board before him were five white chips and a stack of engraved certificates. The latter were Texas land scrip: documents each of which entitled the bearer to the ownership and possession of six hundred and forty acres of Texas public lands.

The Kid watched for some moments. The trend of the play was obvious. The granger was losing; he had evidently parted with all his cash and brought out the scrip in lieu of coin. This practise, if a little unusual here, was common enough down in Texas, where the certificates went begging for buyers in a country that was land poor with millions of unwanted acres. Any squatter could till the soil where he listed, any rancher graze his herds where he willed —at no cost whatever. Ownership of the very same land brought the onerous burden of taxes and little else. In consequence, the desperate effort of the State of Texas to realize on its frozen assets by fiat simply backfired: the land scrip was negotiable only when money gave out, as in a poker game, and then was grudgingly valued at two and a half cents per acre or even less.

After a time, one of the pair of big men looked aside at the Kid. It was Lon Durkin, a couple of years older than his brother; there was a tiny scar in one corner of his small mouth, and an enormous yellow diamond glittered in his black tie.

"You want in, Sabine?" he asked indifferently.

The Kid looked at him.

"Want me in, Lon?"

Durkin shrugged and returned to his cards. The Kid grinned, showing white teeth.

"A little killing at my expense would even matters and make it a right pleasant evening, wouldn't it, Lon?" he said with a suggestion of malice. "You two wouldn't be so unsuspecting and all-fired sure of yourselves as you were a couple of years ago in El Paso. You should have learned something that night. Taking on green youngsters and tenderfoot drunks ain't always the dead cinch it seems. I wonder if you two learned that yet?"

The other brother, Stan Durkin, a shade leaner and if possible harder of face, spoke in a slow, menacing voice—

"Sabine," he said. "If that's your lay, beat it."

"That's my lay, Stan," the Kid said.

The brothers exchanged a glance and were silent. The game came to a halt. There was a feeling of tenseness in the room. Then the bleary granger, already bad tempered from his losses, peered through the smoke haze at the intruder and suddenly recognized him.

"It's that El Paso Kid feller," he

said in a loud voice. Determinedly he gathered his certificates in a crumpled bunch. "Is he playing?" he demanded. "Is he coming in?"

All eyes were on him, but no one answered. The granger became angry.

"Nossir, he don't," he declared. "Not with me. I know him. He comes in then I'm out. Y'understand that?"

The brothers Durkin exchanged another inscrutable glance. Together they looked at the Kid.

"How about pulling out, Sabine?" said Stan Durkin.

The Kid smiled wryly and shrugged.

"Your game, gents," he said. "I'll leave it to you. Only better look out. Your honey bee is touchy. Maybe he packs a stinger."

He sauntered through the door into the outer room.

SHERIFF RUSS TYLER was strolling by as the Kid untied the sorrel's reins at the rack. The Kid promptly fastened the knot again and approached the officer. Tersely he reported what he had seen inside.

Tyler reflected and shook his head.

"I'm sorry to hear that," he said. "But there's nothing I can do, I reckon."

"You know what a crooked team the Durkins are," said the Kid.

"Maybe. But there's no law against gambling. I can't stop them from playing together."

The Kid was caustic.

"You could give me orders, Tyler. But not them. I have no gang, though I reckon they have."

The sheriff was stung.

"Don't you talk to me that way, Sabine," he said. "You're way out on a bad limb about that outfit. Still hankering after that gal, eh? You seen her tonight?"

"No, but I wouldn't mind. I'd like to know what's going on. That fool father of hers is putting up a stack of Texas scrip that's probably the family fortune."

Tyler grunted his indifference.

"He probably won them the same way. It's no great matter. They're worthless."

"They're too valuable to be thrown away," said the Kid. "Do you know where that girl is?"

"Some hotel, I expect," said Tyler. His eyes were intolerant and cold. "But you better keep out of it. It's no concern of yours. I'll look in later on and see how he's making out. That's all I can do."

"I see," said the Kid. He walked back to the horse.

As the Sabine Kid guided the sorrel through the livery yard gate a little later the animal nickered softly. He knew by the slanting yellow beams of light and the warm familiar smells that this was to be his haven. His rider pulled to a halt at the stable door. The Kid looked around, but no one was in sight. In the dim light his eyes glittered a little.

"Damn you, Snowball," he roared, "get out here on the job or I'll rowel your black hide!"

A voice full of consternation made a muffled reply from somewhere within the stable. There was a sound of running feet, and a wide eyed young negro appeared out of the shadows.

"Lawdy, if it ain't Mist' Kid!" he exclaimed. He grasped the bridle. "I'd 'a' sworn on a Bible I was hearin' things. But I been expectin' you passin' by any day. You bound souf fo' home?"

The Kid dismounted with a grunt. He gave short instructions for the care of his horse, and dropped a silver dollar into the darky's palm.

Snowball grinned and shrewdly measured the Kid's mood: he was on the prod about something, and ready to bust loose. He had a few drinks in him, too.

"I'll sho nurse him like a baby, Mist' Kid," Snowball promised. "Me an' yo' Velvet pony is old friends." He edged closer and spoke hoarsely. "Maybe you better kind of bear down on yo' talk—

there's a lady present in this here yard."

The Kid stiffened.

"A lady? Where?"

"Over yonder agin the corral bars. Wagon standin' there. She's sittin' on the seat waitin' fo' her man. He been gone all night. I asked her but she won't come down."

The Kid peered through the shadows. Now he could see the dim blot of color across the yard. It was the granger's girl, alone on the seat of the settler's wagon.

"Hold that horse," the Kid ordered the darky, and strode across the enclosure to the wagon.

The girl was a different creature from the enthralled youngster who had entered Carthage town that afternoon with romance riding in the saddle at her side. A few hours had made her older, but it was an aging that was neither quite new nor unexpected. She had sat through this vigil before.

But tonight, it was different. Too many things foreign and unknown surrounded her. The roaring voice of the town, the music and raucous shouting, the occasional horseplay of pistol shots, even the unaccustomed scent of crowded cattle in the pens, of rough humanity and sweet grasses mingling in the night, all served to undermine her composure. It almost broke down entirely at sight of the one being in all Carthage whom she knew and from whom she might hope for courage and reassurance.

"What's the matter, ma'am?" the Kid asked. "What are you doing here this late?"

Her hands were gripped together and she looked into the dim face of the Kid. She saw no reason to dissemble.

"Pa hasn't come back," she said. "He went off to town early and said we'd move on and camp along the river before dark. I'm frightened. I don't even know where to look for him."

The Kid hesitated.

"That's too bad, ma'am. Maybe he was delayed about some of that business he mentioned."

"No," she said. "I don't think so. He didn't have any real business here. I'm afraid—" her voice trailed off, then gathered firmness—"he may be drinking," she said simply, "and I'm afraid for him in this town."

The Kid placed a hand on the edge of the seat beside her.

"Want me to prowl around a little, ma'am?" he suggested.

"Do you think you could? If I knew nothing happened—"

"I reckon nothing has happened. Did he have much money with him?"

"All we own."

"Anything else?"

She looked at him oddly. Then, without reply, she turned quickly on the seat and bent back to rummage in the darkness among the duffle piled in the fore part of the wagon. Presently she left off. She sat erect.

"Yes," she said, "there was something else."

"I'll see what I can do," he told her.

Her hand fell to the seat. His own covered it, pressed it. She looked at him and did not withdraw her hand.

"Oh, please try," she pleaded.

He smiled.

"I'll do it, ma'am. Don't worry. Snowball will look after you. I'll take a *pasear* and don't you stir till I come back."

"I won't," she promised. Her eyes followed him out of the yard.

The crowd of Front Street through which the Kid pushed his way was an aggregation unique in history. Here the arrogant strength of the frontier and the wealth of the city mingled, and were equally at home. The tinkling spurs and soft voices of the Texans were everywhere; weeks and months of vigilance on the prairie trails brought them into Carthage with vast, insatiable hungers, and the garish lights, the loud music, the clinking glasses and the gaudy ladies made shift to appease them. They were men, they had labored, and diversion was their reward.

The Sabine Kid went directly to the Happy Days Saloon. It was on Front

Street, so that it brought him along the plaza past the hotels and business houses lining that communal center. He was one block from the resort when he heard a muffled report. Others on the sidewalk also heard it; they paused to look about with interest, saw no sign of diversion and forgot it. The Kid did not; his eyes were on the Happy Days and spied the immediate milling in front of its doors. He watched for an instant, then broke into a run.

There was a confusion of excitement in the Happy Days when the Kid burst through the crowd in the entrance. The games were suspended while the players peered toward the back room on which all attention was centered. Sheriff Russ Tyler, by chance, had been at hand. He was framed in the open doorway against the green and yellow glow of the interior, looking grimly downward at a body sprawled on the floor.

The Kid reached his side.

"Who is it, Tyler?" he asked, although he knew.

The sheriff looked at him.

"The granger," he said. "He's got his."

Within the room Lon Durkin, behind the table, spoke with cool assurance.

"It was clear self-defense. That fellow pulled at his gun. These gentlemen will bear out our statement."

The evasive, vaguely frightened eyes of the two nondescripts answered for them. They would bear out the statement. Coldly composed, unmoved in his seat, Stan Durkin looked at the sheriff and at the Kid and grunted malevolently as he broke open his heavy .44 Colt and jacked out an emptly shell.

AS THE Kid walked steadily across the livery yard from the gate to the wagon, the girl awaited his news anxiously. She took notice of his somber air, and dread was in her voice.

"Did you find him?"

The Kid stood looking at her silently. His face was expressionless, his eyes unreadable.

"Oh, please—" she begged.

"I found him," he said slowly. His voice was husky. "He was—hurt. I found him too late."

A cry rose from the depths of her being.

"He's dead!" she wailed tragically in a low voice. "I know he is. I know it."

Beads of agony glistened on his brow.

"I'm sorry, ma'am. I reckon he is."

She cowered, numbed and speechless. Her hands were over her face and her body swayed. The Kid was up beside her quickly, arms about her. He spoke earnestly, seeking for a way to soothe her.

After awhile she was quiet again. She sat still breathing deeply. Composure gradually returned. She finally said:

"Tell me about it. I want to know all that happened."

At the last of the narrative she was seated erect, staring into the darkness with dry eyes. Her mouth was firm, though there was a tragic bleakness about the corners.

"I didn't dare tell you," she said with seeming irrelevance when he was finished, "but the sheriff was here before dark. He looked us up. Pa was gone, so—" her voice broke; but then she regained control—"so he talked to me. He talked about you. He said you had stolen horses and smuggled them over the Rio Grande. He said you were a gunman and had killed a man. He said —other things."

The Kid drew a little away from her.

"I reckon maybe he had a right," he said without emotion.

"I just told you," she went on, "so I could say that I don't believe a word of it." She looked at him. "I've got to trust somebody now. I trust you. Will you take me to him?"

The Kid took the deep slow breath that is reaction fom the unexpected.

"I'll take you," he said. "But not just yet. It wouldn't do any good to go into that saloon. I want to talk to you about something, first."

"Yes?" she said, waiting.

"About money. You got any?"

"He had it all. I never carried it."

"Folks you can telegraph to?"

"No. We're alone since ma died."

The Kid frowned, thinking. After a moment the girl said hesitantly:

"Pa owned some Texas land scrip. One hundred and five of them. Did they find the certificates?"

The Kid looked at her. He nodded.

"Yes, they found them. I was just thinking. I can get them for you. Fact is, I better do that before anything else." He acted on the thought and dropped to the ground.

But she detained him.

"Can't you take me to him first?" she pleaded. "They can wait. I don't care."

"No, ma'am, I'd rather not," he said. "I want you to wait here for me and not to stir till I get back."

She looked at him.

"You won't be long, please?"

"Only long enough to get that scrip. I'll come back. Count on me, ma'am."

She submitted, though reluctantly.

"I don't like to be left alone now. I want to go to him. But I'll stay."

He smiled and reached up to take her hand. His eyes narrowed, and he gave the hand a quick pressure. Then he turned about and made his way out of the yard with swift, long strides.

The Happy Days had resumed its industrious air of play when the Kid returned. A knot of morbidly curious souls were gathered before the open doorway at the rear, staring within. The room's late occupants were gone. The killing was already of the past; and the present, to Carthage, was too engrossing, the future too momentous.

The Kid inquired, and learned that the body had been removed to the undertaker's after the coroner had pronounced the death a case of justifiable homicide. The case was closed. All the actors in the drama had taken their exit.

The Kid caught the attention of his acquaintance behind the bar.

"Where did the Durkins go?"

The bartender shrugged.

"They're through playing for tonight. Showing themselves around, I reckon."

"They ain't overmodest, for a fact. I'll drift around myself awhile."

At the next saloon the bartender reported a brief visit by the brothers. They had bought a round of drinks for the crowd and gone their way. The Kid nodded casually and went on to a third resort.

The Durkins had speedily made the rounds. They were public figures, and their reputations were part of their stock in trade. A man had rashly challenged them and died. Others had done so before; might again. It was expedient and wise that the town remember.

But now the Durkins had disappeared. Any number of reasons might account for it. It might be part of their strategy, it might be a simple satisfaction with the night's work—or it might have been prompted by a recollection of the attitude none too subtly manifested by the Sabine Kid that night.

THE Kid went to the Planter's House near the depot. There were no planters in Carthage town, obviously, but the proprietor was a Louisiana man and he had been in a sentimental mood at the christening. He was seated behind the small desk reading a newspaper. The Kid leaned over the desk.

"The Durkins come in yet, Clayborne?"

Clayborne, lean, languid and wise, peered at him over the top of the paper. His reply came a fractional second slow.

"Why, I ain't seen them, Kid."

The Kid nodded.

"Been wanting to talk to them. They ain't around." He stood erect, took an easy hitch in his cartridge belt, and spoke in a conversational tone. "It's just likely they come in without you seeing them. I reckon I'll knock on their door. Mind especially?"

"No-o," Clayborne said.

"What's the number?"

"Sorry, Sabine," Clayborne said. "Against the house rules to give out room numbers."

"The hell it is," the Kid said mildly. "But that don't matter. You got one big double room in the front of the second floor that's generally occupied by folks of importance. I reckon it's just the Durkins' size." He looked keenly at the proprietor and asked a second time, "Do you mind especially, Clayborne?"

Clayborne returned the steady gaze. His own eyes were equally steady; but he said nothing, though the pause was painfully prolonged.

"Fair enough," said the Kid. "I thought so." He sauntered across the small lobby to the stairs.

A command to "Come in!" answered the Kid's knock at the room on the floor above. He turned the knob and entered, closing the door behind him. The Durkins were here. They were both in shirt sleeves, guns naked in skeleton holsters under their left arms. Stan, the younger one who had shot the granger, sat on the edge of the bed where a deck of cards was laid out on the counterpane in solitaire. Lon occupied a chair drawn up to a table; Texas scrip certificates were scattered before him and he was in the midst of calculations on a slip of paper.

Both men looked up and ceased activity. They sat in chill silence, staring at the Kid. Stan Durkin's head lowered ever so slightly in a manner suggestive of a great cat tensing for the charge. Lon's eyes seemed to retreat behind a veil of heavy black lashes.

There was no fencing, no dissembling. Stan Durkin growled—

"What do *you* want?"

The Kid strolled toward the table, thumbs hooked in his belt. He stopped, feet wide apart, and smiled from the side of his mouth, looking from one to the other. He took out the makings and rolled a cigaret.

"Just a little visit," he said. "I have something to tell you I thought you might be thankful to hear."

They waited for him to go on.

"It's about a little mistake you-all made this evening," he continued. "You crosswhipped that granger, took his money and scrip from him, and shot him down when he balked. You went to work on him under the impression that he was alone and on his own. I tried to warn you-all the time I dropped in, but it didn't seem to take. You see, he wasn't actually alone and there's other parties to consider."

"Yes?" said Lon Durkin with suave caution. "Who?"

"And likewise," added Stan, disregarding caution, "how?"

"Well," said the Kid, "first there's a daughter of his waiting for him down at the livery corral. This killing leaves her without friends or money. She don't know her old man gambled with the scrip."

"That's mighty unfortunate," Lon said dryly. "And who is the second party concerned?"

The Kid touched a match to his cigaret.

"I am," he said, between puffs. His eyes were on the two men. "I told you-all I was in this. And no matter who liked it or didn't, I'm in."

Stan Durkin faced forward on his seat on the bed, then got up and advanced toward the table.

"Yeah?" he said. "Go right on."

"There's no need," the Kid snarled. "You-all know what I'm here for. I'll take that scrip back where it belongs."

Lon Durkin's hand went out to sweep the certificates together, then halted midway. The Kid's look dissuaded him. Stan Durkin stood immobile, caught in the center of a whirling fury of hatred. The issue was clear; the moment electric and deadly. Possession of the certificates no longer reposed in the two Durkins. The scrip lay between them on the table, the spoils of whichever side owned the strength to maintain its claim.

"Get out of here, Sabine," Lon Durkin said huskily. "This will be mighty costly if you stay."

"You're damn right it will, Lon Durkin. I don't aim to stay."

The Kid took a step closer to the table. Stan Durkin uttered a sound of inarticulate fury, and his hand plunged sidewise for his gun. The Kid made a flipping motion with his right hand, and the ivory handled Colt roared even before it attained a level in front of him. It drove a leaden slug into Stan Durkin's middle just above the belt; the big man was struck with instantaneous paralysis, and he sagged where he stood like a sack of grain split asunder.

Lon Durkin made a convulsive grab for his gun. The Kid swung on him without pausing to observe the effect of his first shot. He released a second and, with the report, Lon Durkin dropped his weapon on the table and clutched at his right arm just over the elbow. His face was ashen as he stared at the Kid.

"By the Lord, you sat up begging for it!" the Kid said through his teeth.

Stan Durkin, eyes blank as marbles and skin gray with death, hit the floor with a resounding thud. On the washstand the water pitcher danced in the china bowl.

"That's murder, Sabine," grated the staring man across the table.

"Shut up or you'll get it too!" snarled the Kid. He stepped to the table. He loosed a button of his shirt and swept up the scattered certificates and stuffed them down the shirtfront. He backed quickly to the door.

"You make another play for this scrip and I'll follow you clean to hell, Durkin," he said. He paused a moment, meeting the gaze of the wounded man; then he jerked open the door and stepped into the hall.

The door slammed violently, and he was gone.

A few minutes later the Sabine Kid peered through the corral bars into the livery yard, then clambered over and dropped on the soft earth. He ran to the wagon resting dimly in the farther shadows. No one was on the seat. He rounded the wagon and stopped. He looked about in bewilderment. The girl was gone. He waited a moment, listening, then hurried across the yard to the stable.

No one was in the stable. The Kid called for Snowball, but there was no answer. He cursed and ran back to the stalls.

The Kid had his horse saddled and ready when the hostler returned. The sorrel was good for a burst of speed; the darkness would save a long chase. Snowball entered the stable at a run and skidded to a halt at sight of the horse and its rider.

"Mist' Kid!" he gasped in tense excitement. "They lookin' fo' you."

"I know it," snapped the Kid. "Where's that girl gone?"

"Sheriff Tyler done come an' git her. Right after you left. Did you shoot Mist' Durkin?"

"I did. What are they saying?"

"Sayin' you snuk up on 'em an' cut loose 'thout them gittin' a chance to go fo' their guns."

"That's a lie," said the Kid. "I want you to find that girl and tell her so. I bucked those two to get something that belonged to her. They stole it, and I was afraid they'd fight for it. They did—but I got it. Tell her that." He reached into his shirt for the certificates. "I wanted to give them to her before I lit out, but you can do it for me. And wait till you can do it alone, or I'll—"

The hostler was not listening. He was staring in terror out into the darkness of the yard. He let out a moan of anguish and suddenly bolted for the rear of the stable. A gun thundered in the yard and a bullet cracked like a whip in its passage a couple of inches from the Kid's ear. The Kid dropped to a crouch in the saddle and dug home the spurs. The sorrel went through the stable door as though flung from a catapult. He swerved to escape running

down a man advancing over the yard, and fled through the yard gate. In the street the Kid headed him west, away from the lights of the town. The sorrel leaped into a fierce, tearing gallop.

Behind them rose a shout and a staccato burst of shots. Before them loomed the darkness of the prairie. Swiftly the Sabine Kid fled southward through the night.

STEADILY with the advancing Summer the cattle toiled up the Texas trail, herd after patient herd, mile long reservoirs of dumb brute power in fluid motion. Each was a thousand tons of living beef borne on twelve thousand trail worn hoofs; the hoofs cut the dry packed earth and left behind each herd a pluming pillar of shimmering dust. With every herd rode a dozen hard, lean men.

Each of these roving bands had its day in Carthage, whether the town was its destination or merely a port of call. And at least one of each band visited the little restaurant opened that Summer opposite the livery yard. It was barely more than a lunch counter in a board shack, situated poorly, away from the center of things; but the plain food was excellently cooked, and it was served by a very pretty girl.

A good many of those riders were questioned casually as to one Sabine Kid, his whereabouts and present welfare. But none of the number so favored was able to help.

Russ Tyler was given to wondering about that. It did not seem credible that the Sabine Kid could have made any profound impression on the girl. The sheriff, inured to death and violence, did not realize how deeply engraved on her soul was every moment of that fateful, brief evening. The Kid had been the only one to give her the kind of sympathy, the forthright kind of aid that she could understand. He had killed a man for her, for justice and for protection, and her horror over the fact was small beside her heartfelt awe. A man had done so much—for her . . .

"You're still expecting that Texas cowboy to come fogging in, ain't you?" Russ Tyler said to her as he leaned on the counter in a slow hour one day, late in the Summer. "Still figuring on his honesty?"

The girl looked at him evenly. The months had matured her.

"Maybe I am," she said without a suggestion of defense. "He has my Texas scrip, and he said he'd come back."

The sheriff nodded ironically.

"I can just picture him coming back to Carthage with a murder on his head—coming back specially to deliver a bundle of pretty engraved certificates that might do for wall paper in a shack with a leaky roof."

"It wasn't murder," she said, in the manner of one taking up an old and quite hopeless argument. "And besides, the scrip isn't worthless."

"Ain't no good to anybody," the sheriff said. "Can't sell it. Any price on it is lower than a hole in the ground. And steadily going lower. Your father got stung, paying three thousand dollars for it. That's close to five cents an acre—and the best price you could get out here time he bought it was two and a half."

"He didn't know," said the girl. "It seemed pretty wonderful, then. Almost seventy thousand acres of land. He sold out the farm in Clay County, Illinois, and put everything into scrip and started for this country. We worked as we went, saving the scrip. But every now and then he drank. I was always afraid of that."

"Too bad," said Tyler, shaking his head in understanding. "I've seen many a good man end up the same way in these towns."

The girl stared through the small paned window into the afternoon sunlight. She sighed.

"Maybe he should have let them keep it," she said.

"Who? You mean the Kid?" said the

sheriff. "Sure he should have. But forget him, girl, and forget your scrip. They're both no good, even though they both look pretty at first glance. If the Kid shows up I take him in for murder—and Lon Durkin will see to it with his last dollar that he hangs. You're better off."

Presently Summer was gone, and the great herds no longer hove over the southern horizon. The cattle market slackened and died, and now the town was crowded with men returning homeward from the north. They were jubilant over their freedom and prosperous with months of pay.

Then in time they too were gone, and the prairie breeze was edged with the foretaste of Winter as it blew into the quieting town. The loungers were few and had the sunlit plaza to themselves; the hitch rails were deserted and the gamblers played interminable solitaire in the resorts.

And then, with a swooping drop of forty degrees in temperature and a wailing, snow laden wind that swept from the Arctic fringes, Winter was suddenly on the land.

Those months were terrible for the girl. In the beginning she had been too stunned to suffer deeply; necessity had compelled her to plunge into the swirling life of Carthage and it had been a narcotic to her senses. The little restaurant, a vitally necessary mainstay set up on funds resulting from the sale of the team and wagon and the gear, took possession of all her time and energy and sent her to rest drugged with weariness.

But the season waned and business decreased, and there came empty hours when the world was bleak and loneliness was a haunting terror. Money grew scarce and her reserve fund dwindled. Only Russ Tyler, whose outward attitude was half paternal and half impersonal, seemed to have any insight; and only with him was she off her guard, despite his cynical convictions.

"You're casting pearls before swine, as the preacher says," he told her. "You're young, and being young is something valuable. You're throwing it all away. The Kid is gone. How long will it take for you to learn that, girl?"

"It's taking a long time, isn't it?" she said with a wan smile.

"It sure is. You can't count on the scrip to bring him back. He's somewhere west of the Pecos by now, and he's forgotten all about it. He's likely lost the certificates long ago over a poker table. It was all just another moment in his life." The sheriff looked at her. "I know his kind, girl. You'll never see him again."

She looked away with sudden pain in her brown eyes.

Russ Tyler shrugged, and in his own hard, dark eyes there was pity.

MOMENTOUS was the turn of that year in the wide empire of cattle. Elsewhere in the nation quiet and inactivity reigned, and capital turned for employment to the unexploited resources of the frontier. The time was ripe for a boom. The great Southern ranges were bursting with marketable stock, and the railroads and the great Texas-Montana trail afforded an outlet.

The signal for the onset of the boom was sounded in Texas. It came from a most unexpected quarter. A syndicate of shrewd investors, at work for upward of a year, organized a raid on the untouched wealth of the wastelands. They knew, from the perspective of history, that the firmest foundation of wealth is land.

Secret agents, scattered through the State, quietly began buying options on large blocks of land scrip; available lots were located for future action, and all details of the coup were carefully rehearsed. On a date set long ahead, the agents swung into action, taking up all options and buying every certificate on which they could place a bid. At the close of the day possession of a veritable kingdom was in their hands.

The following morning exultation and

consternation together swept the State. Certificates rose overnight from fifteen dollars in value clear to fifty, and kept right on climbing. Those canny enough to hold their scrip were enriched. Those who had sold their holdings blanched at the outcome and wailed their chagrin to the heavens. On all sides a land rush started, and every surveyor in the State worked night and day laying out boundaries on the uncharted plains. It was a time with few parallels in the history of the frontier. Before Winter was over the county clerks' files over all western Texas bulged with recorded deeds registering title on every choice bottomland and watercourse section to be found.

Spring grew lush on the land, and with the northward march of grass the early contingents from the breeding ranges began to file over the horizon. Cook-fires sent new streamers of smoke into the still air above the camp grounds. On the streets of Carthage the spurs of Texas cattlemen once more jingled in exultant rhythm.

It was close to ten o'clock one still, warm evening when Snowball, about to shut the livery stable doors, gave a frightened start. In the darkness of the yard was a man; and the man came forward into the light, walking slowly, easily, yet warily.

"Howdy, Snowball," the Kid said quietly.

"Lawd!" gasped the hostler. "Mist' Kid! You done come back."

"Reckon so, Snowball." The Sabine Kid was composed, watchful. "Got a little business to attend to so I drifted north."

"They still lookin' fo' you, Mist' Kid. You know that?"

The Sabine Kid smiled.

"I'm not surprised. I left my horse in an alley and come here first to get the lay of the town. Russ Tyler still on the job?"

"Sho is. Ain't been a minute away from it. Got a new rule this year. Nobody carryin' no guns in town or they get in trouble bad."

"How about Lon Durkin?"

"He been away all Winter, but he come back las' week. He posted a reward of five thousan' dollars on you."

"Bargain rates." The Kid snorted. He rolled a cigaret and touched a match to the tip. "And something else, Snowball. That girl whose old man was shot by Stan Durkin that night—what become of her?"

The eyes of the darky were shining. He shuffled forward and pointed to the small building opposite the yard gate. A light shone in the rear of the place.

"You see that, Mist' Kid?" he said. "She over there. She been there since, runnin' that rest'rant—waitin' all the time."

The Kid glanced with interest at the little eating place. Then he looked at the hostler.

"Waiting? What for?"

"Fo' you, Mist' Kid."

The Kid's expression did not change. The cigaret burned in neglect between his fingers.

"Yeah?" he said. "Waiting for me?"

"Waitin' fo' you, Mist' Kid," Snowball repeated with relish. "I know because she done told me so herself. You said fo' her to wait, you told her you'd be back. She ain't never fergot."

"She spent all this time looking for me to turn up with her scrip?"

"Wasn't that no-'count scrip been on her mind," the hostler said. "Something else been on her mind."

The Kid grunted, staring over the yard. He dropped the cigaret to earth and crushed it with his toe.

"Snowball, I reckon you know that clutter of shacks south of town. I left my horse in the alley there. You go and get him. Bring him here."

"You bet, Mist' Kid."

"And when you've done that, go ahead across the street and tell her I've come back. Tell her to step outside the back door. That's all—and get a gait on."

"Yes, suh, Mist' Kid." Grinning, the darky left the yard at a run.

The Kid smoked quietly as he waited

behind the little restaurant. A faint glow of starlight filtered through the darkness. The Kid had seen no one within the place when he glanced in the front window, but now he could hear through the thin rear walls the clatter of utensils and crockery.

Suddenly the door burst open and flung a beam of light into the darkness. The girl poised on the sill, staring into the night. She spied the Kid, and came immediately toward him.

"It's you!" she said. "You've come back?"

"I reckon I have, ma'am," the Kid said. "You been looking for me to turn up?"

"I knew you would," she said. She halted, hesitated helplessly, and did not know what to say. "They told me you'd never come."

"Then they were wrong, ma'am," the Kid said. He hesitated. "I had to come. That Texas land scrip—"

"Don't talk about it now," she interrupted. "You're sure nobody saw you? Sheriff Tyler is still looking for you. Will you be safe?"

"I can take care of myself, I reckon," the Kid replied. "I didn't plan to linger none."

"What are you going to do?" she asked. Her feelings were torn between happiness and dread at his danger. Then a new and unexpected fear arose. "You're not—" she began. "You don't expect to—" She could not quite utter it.

He took her hands in his. He looked at her soberly a moment. Then his voice was curt, hard.

"What did you figure I'd do?"

She stared at him, then shook her head helplessly.

"I don't know."

"I'm a fugitive," he said. "There's a price on my head—for murder. They'll hang me if they catch up with me."

She put a quick hand over his mouth.

"Don't talk like that. It wasn't murder. I know it wasn't."

"How do you know?"

She was silent. Then she said simply:

"You told me so. You told Snowball to tell me. You told me to wait for you. I've waited almost a year. I stayed where you could find me when you came."

The Kid took a deep breath, and he put his hands on her slender shoulders.

Then after a long moment he said:

"I'm heading back southward. I've got to go."

"And what am I going to do?"

"You? You're coming with me. We're traveling south. We're going tonight."

Without surprise or misgiving she said:

"I'll go. I'm 'most ready to start."

THERE was a poker game in one of the rear rooms at the Happy Days. Lon Durkin was present, gleaning the first harvest of the season from a quintet of cattle traders who had set out for blood only to find themselves deftly being bled by a master of the art.

The door was partly open, for the atmosphere was close in the room. The door which led to the barroom, that is to say, was open. The infrequently used rear door was closed as usual: it led to the small hallway which in turn led to the alley behind the resorts.

There was no key in the lock of that rear door, so that nothing hindered the Sabine Kid when he opened it and stepped quietly into the room from the empty passageway. He closed it and stood against the wall, his eyes watchful, his thumbs hooked over his belt. The players glanced up at the intrusion, and for an instant failed to gather the full import of this visit, so unobtrusive was the visitor.

"Better sit quiet, gents," the Kid suggested.

"The Sabine Kid!" exclaimed one in consternation.

He made a grab for his chips; then stopped. No one made so much as a suggestion of a move for a gun.

Lon Durkin spoke in a slow voice.

"Well, if it isn't the Sabine Kid!" He looked at the Texan with measureless hatred. "Playing a return engagement, eh?"

"Just lighting for a moment, Lon," said the Kid. "I understand you're wanting me for murder."

"The law wants you, Sabine. Not me."

"Your five thousand is talking, Lon. Your money and your perjury."

"My perjury ain't needed," said Durkin. "You established the motive when you stole that scrip, killed my brother and bolted town. The case is cold, and you hang, Kid."

"First catch me," the Kid reminded him. They looked at each other across the green table and their audience was forgotten. The Kid went on, "You nor your law will ever catch me, Lon. I'm going away from here, and Carthage will be dry bones before I come this way again. You'll never have the satisfaction of hanging me. I did think maybe you might find some satisfaction in turning honest for once and dropping that charge before I go."

"You rat," said Durkin, "you'll hang."

The Kid studied Durkin.

"I'd hang no higher for a sheep than a goat, Lon," he said. "And they can't hang me twice no matter how many killings they get on me. My gun is in its holster. So's yours. Suppose you go for that iron of yours first!"

Whatever Durkin's thoughts, no wish for this trial by ordeal was to be observed in his face. He sat motionless.

"I put ten thousand in escrow for an additional reward on your head if I die, Sabine," he said.

"You're a yellow dog," said the Kid without passion. "There ain't one of your breed ever fought a square fight. Your brother last year had the drop on me and a killing in his mind. I got him first. Deny it to my face. Speak up, if you got the guts."

Durkin's eyes did not shift, but he made no reply.

The Kid flipped his gun from the holster. On the table the players' hands tensed. The Kid laughed. It was a contemptuous, brittle laugh. There was a painful silence. The gun, muzzle upward, abruptly exploded. The hanging lamp shattered, showering the table with broken glass. A voice shouted in fear. The table overturned with the violent surge of bodies seeking cover.

The rear door opened slightly on the dim hall; a shadow passed through; then it slammed shut. The Kid was gone.

At the livery corral, the Kid flung himself over the bars and dropped into the yard before the stable. He was breathing heavily. The stable appeared deserted, but as he looked around there came a call from within.

"In here, Mist' Kid. We all ready."

The Kid ran inside. Snowball, afire with purpose, was dragging a horse from a stall. It was the sorrel, saddled and ready. From another stall, where it also had been hidden from sight, the girl was leading a handsome smoke horse bearing a small blanket roll behind the saddle. The kid went to her.

"Ready?" he said.

"I'm ready," she answered. "Do we start?"

"Right now," he told her. "We'll have to ride like a bat out of hell. They're looking for me in the town this minute."

"Then hurry!" she urged. "Don't let them stop us now." She rose into the saddle.

"Good girl," he said, and ran to the sorrel. As he mounted he tossed the hostler a gold piece. Tell your boss I'll send him the price of that smoke horse, Snowball. Ready, girl?"

He was in the saddle. He waited for the girl to precede him, and they crossed the threshold. They set their mounts' heads for the gate—and then they stopped. A voice challenged them out of the night.

"Stay where you are or I fire! This is a shotgun, Kid."

It was the voice of Sheriff Russ Tyler.

The Kid had made a convulsive start

for his gun, but froze before completing the movement. The girl was between him and the sheriff. She sat speechless. The Kid himself was helpless, as if tied hand and foot while the gun bore on the girl. Russ Tyler advanced out of the darkness, a smile of satisfaction on his lean face.

"I had a notion I'd find you two together," he said. He glanced at the girl. "I been quietly seeing you safe home every night since the coming of Spring, girl. Just on the off chance that you might be right. I was wrong, and I admit it." He stopped before them and glanced at his prisoner. "Howdy, Kid," he said.

The Texan looked at him. He took a slow breath and then slid from the saddle, moving deliberately and keeping his hands away from his body. The girl watched him with stark eyes. He faced the sheriff.

"Well, you got me, Russ," he said. "How do you like working for Lon Durkin?"

"I neither shot the victim nor wrote the warrant," Tyler replied dryly. "Sorry, Kid."

The Kid shook his head.

"No, you're not, Russ. You're due a nice reward. You earned it. Still, I reckon you're white enough that you'd be sorry if you knew the facts."

The sheriff looked at him skeptically.

"You're remarkable flattering for a prisoner, Kid. Most of them cuss a blue streak."

"Showing off," said the Texan. "I'm not, Russ."

Tyler grunted.

"Where were you heading now?"

"South," said the Kid. "Texas."

"You and the girl?"

The girl spoke up.

"Certainly I was going with him. He came for me, didn't he, Russ Tyler?" She glanced at the Kid, then at the officer. "You're mighty sure of yourself, Russ Tyler, for a man that's blind to the facts!"

TYLER looked at her tolerantly.

"Maybe," he said. His gaze shifted to the Kid, and grew hard. "What brought you back to this town, Sabine?"

The Kid was slow to answer.

"You know what happened down in Texas last Winter," he said. "Land went up, Russ. I'd carried off all that scrip that didn't belong to me. I had to come back."

Russ Tyler frowned.

"You mean to say you brought back the certificates?"

"No," said the Kid. "I didn't bring it back. I used it, Russ. It was too valuable. I thought at first it was worthless; so did you. The Durkins probably knew all along what was due to happen. All of a sudden it was priceless. The best lands were being surveyed all over Texas. I had to work fast. I lit out for a valley on the Brazos and took possession of a strip running twenty-five miles along the river. Holding the water, it controls the range over a quarter-million acres. A quarter-million, Russ. The scrip alone, the morning the boom broke, was worth over five thousand dollars. A week later I could have sold it for ten. The land, now, is worth more than I can work up nerve enough to even guess at."

Russ Tyler's face was unreadable.

"Whose name is this fortune in?"

"Mine," said the Kid. "Had to be. I didn't know the right name, never had learned it; and there was no way to find out. I couldn't write and tell my whereabouts."

"You hear that, Sheriff?" the girl demanded.

"I hear it," said Tyler, without shifting his gaze. "What are you going to do with it?" he asked the Kid.

The Kid shrugged wearily.

"I was going to transfer ownership. It ain't mine."

"Half of it is," said the girl. "I'd have lost it all, myself."

The Kid smiled.

"Well, Russ, I reckon at least this ought to settle your mind about my motives."

"I don't know," said Russ Tyler. "There are one or two things." He was silent a moment. Then he went on, "You're a peculiar cuss, Sabine. I thought I knew you pretty well; you were a wild one and no mistake. But maybe I'm learning things."

"They say it's never too late, Russ," said the Kid.

"I can understand why you come back, I reckon," continued the sheriff. "When you lit out with that scrip last Summer it didn't seem to matter. Later on it did—you being constituted in that peculiar way. It belonged to somebody else, and you were honor bound to take care of the trust. Am I right?"

"Reckon so," said the Kid.

"Next you had to ride north and risk Carthage again to look for the owner. That's clear, too." Russ Tyler paused and then asked, "But did you really expect, Kid, that you'd find her?"

The Kid's nostrils quivered and he stepped forward to the very muzzle of the shotgun. His eyes were hot and his hands were clenched.

"Damn you," he said in a voice suddenly gone hoarse, "what if I didn't? I reckon I can read the earmarks of something decent and square."

"Easy, Kid," soothed the sheriff. The wrinkles, fine and worn and wise, were gathered close about his eyes.

"Easy she goes, son." He looked at the Kid a long minute, and the Texan gave stare for stare. Then Russ Tyler spoke sharply. "Who else knows you're in town?"

"The whole damn town knows it!" snarled the Kid. "They're up there looking for me."

"You damn fool!" snapped the sheriff. "How are the horses?"

"Good for a run."

Tyler glanced aside and called to the hostler:

"Snowball, open the corral. Then unfasten the back gate into the alley. Run, boy!"

The hostler, still as a statue, came suddenly to life and flew across the yard to the corral.

Russ Tyler swung the shotgun to his left hand. He thrust out his right and gripped the Kid's hand with a clasp of iron.

"Good luck, son!"

The Kid choked and his hand returned the grip.

"Russ—"

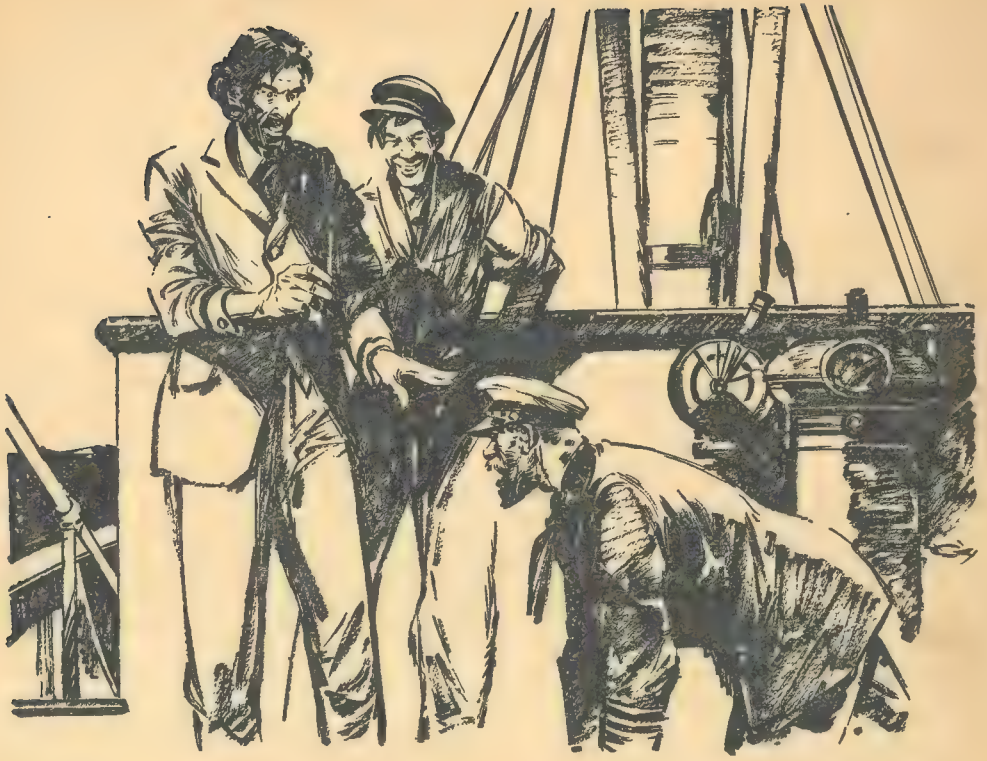
"In the saddle!" commanded the sheriff. He released his hold on the Kid's hand. Turning to the girl, he doffed his hat. "And luck to you too, daughter. Take good care of this reckless maverick!"

The Kid vaulted into the saddle and was alongside the girl, his horse eager and straining at the bit. He spoke to her imperiously. She gripped the reins. She waved a hand in the air. The horses moved.

"Goodby, Russ Tyler!" she called.

"My regards to Texas!" said Tyler.

He stood watching as they vanished together into the night.



The SPELLBINDER

By R. V. GERY

A COUPLE of depressed looking men were being conducted down the gangway of the freighter in the next berth to ours. They were unwashed and untidily clad, and looked in general as if existence for some little time had been anything but kind to them. With each of them walked a stalwart member of the dock police.

Challis, the *Levuka's* gigantic second mate, leaned over the rail and cocked a sympathetic eye at them.

"See that?" he said to me. "Know what them are? Stowaways. There's been such a perishin' lot of blokes lately grabbin' free rides, on the off-chance the skipper'll be soft enough to give 'em a nice pleasant little job chippin' paint or peelin' spuds in the galley, that masters an' owners run 'em in now, automatic, soon's they dock." He grinned compassionately at the two unfortunates. "They're off to chokey this minute, they are—two months they'll get, sure pop. It's a hard life."

I knew Challis well enough by now to administer a delicate prod to him. His stories usually need priming.

"You seem to have a soft spot for stowaways."

"Me?" He rumbled a laugh, deep in his great barrel of a chest. "Well, maybe. P'raps I have. That is, since—"

He stopped abruptly, his ruminative glance straying across to the hospitable portals of the Green Man on the quayside. I had seen that look before, and made haste to take the hint. We went over and I ordered beer for two.

Challis blew the froth off a hospitable tankard.

"Well, 'ere's santy to us all!" he rumbled.

I slid my tobacco pouch across the table and sat back. Challis adjusted his terrific shoulders in the corner of a settle and proceeded to fill a gargantuan pipe with a finger like a pavior's maul. He laughed.

"Yes," he said. "I s'pose I 'ave got a bit of kindness for stowaways. Most officers 'aven't. But since I saw one of 'em, an' what 'e did, I've felt different."

"Proceed," I said.

Challis puffed great clouds of smoke and began . . .

Stowaways [he said] are a bloomin' nuisance as a general rule. They're sick, or they're dirty, or they're damn lazy, or like as not they're all three. You'll find ship's officers ain't got much tenderness for 'em, an' a good dose of boot half a dozen times a day is what they usually get. But I've always thought different, somehow, since I see what I see in the old *Benguela*, on the coast run, an' that's fifteen years ago, good.

I was Third on 'er, an' of all the crook tempered old ashcans afloat, she was the worst I ever see. That run—Liverpool to Lagos, an' messin' round the rivers after nuts an' oil—ain't any bed o' roses anyhow, as you may be aware; but on the *Benguela* it was a slice of extry-special hell. She'd neither steam nor steer nor stay a course for an hour on end, an' she was a rollin' furnace down on the line; an' when it come to anything like a seaway, she was a fair swimmin' bath.

We'd just come into the Mersey, after she'd dropped her propeller forty mile out an' wandered loose up an' down the Irish Sea for half a day until a tug come out for 'er. Bates, the master, went ashore to report, an' what did happen I never really knew; but in an hour he was back again, purple about the gills an' spittin' fire an' damnation, an' had packed his duds an' out of it. I might add that this sort o' business wasn't anything out of the way with the *Benguela*. She'd got through four masters in eighteen months.

McRimmon, that was engineer, came up for a breather. He'd been superintendin' the shippin' of a new propeller, an' he wasn't in any ways pretty to look at—nor to 'ear, for 'e was swearin' cold, Clyde fashion. An' that's cruel stuff, as you may be aware. He looks at Bates goin' down the plank.

"Eh-h?" says 'e, stoppin' cursin' for a moment an' liftin' his Scotch terrier's eyebrows. "Anither?"

" 'E's gone," I says to 'im. "An' from what I 'ear of the owners of this 'ooker, I don't blame 'im a bit."

McRimmon strokes his chin.

"Na," says 'e. "A skinflintin' parcel o' condemned Israelites, Muster Challis," 'e says. "An' if it wasna that I'm professionally interested to see 'ow far yon creation o' sardine tins an' scrap iron they ca' engines can be coaxed to revolve, I'd be awa' after him this minute."

'E was like that, McRimmon—a genius for machinery, but without a sniff o' discipline in 'im; the kind of engineer masters let alone if they know what's what. 'E wasn't like the masters, though; 'e'd been with the *Benguela* now for years, an' what 'e didn't savvy about 'er an' 'er owners you could put in the corner of your eye an' forget about, as you might say. A quiet, cunnin', independent Scotchman, that didn't care for man or devil, an' wasn't particular who knew it. An' dirty—Mac wasn't what you might call 'appy unless 'e was a couple of inches deep in oil an' grease; an' 'e'd a 'abit of comin' into the saloon just so, that some mas-

ters used to kick about, until they saw the no-sense of kickin'. That was Sandy McRimmon, an' a better engineer you'd not find in a month o' Sundays.

'E looks down at the dock where we are.

"Eh-h!" 'e says again. "So there's Bates awa'. An' now who'll they be sendin' us, I wonder?"

Leggatt, the first officer, had gone up to the office as well. In awhile 'ere 'e comes back in a 'urry.

" 'Ere's the man that'll tell us," I says to Mac. "An' by the look o' things 'e's not bringin' any good news."

Leggatt runs up the gangway with a face like a thunderstorm. 'E comes up to us.

"Well," 'e says, mighty savage. "We've a new master, gentlemen."

"Who?" asks Mac, taking his pipe out of his mouth.

"Who d'ye think?" Leggatt snarls. "Captain William Jarvis, gentlemen—an' you'd do well to lay out your Sunday suits, for 'e'll be familiar enough to both of you."

McRimmon drops 'is pipe out of 'is mouth on to the deck, an' doesn't trouble to pick it up.

"Wh-what's yon?" 'e splutters. "They've not given that auld graven image the *Benguela?*"

Leggatt nods, and McRimmon lets out a fathom and a half of expressions that'd sour the milk. Well 'e might, too, for there wasn't any one on Merseyside that time didn't know Jarvis. 'E'd a reputation that stank from Birkenhead to Bonny River, an' that's sayin' something, for you come across some cautions on that trip. I'd not seen 'im, so far, but Leggatt 'ad, an' McRimmon 'ad sailed with 'im, years before.

"Why," I says, more to try the other two out than anything else, "what's the matter?"

"Matter?" Leggatt snorts. "You let that old coot aboard 'ere for 'alf a day, Challis, an' you'll soon see what's the matter. The man's a lunatic!"

"Aye," McRimmon grunts. " 'E's waur nor that. Did ye ever know what it was, Muster Challis, to be ordered about by an auld wummun with ideas of discipline, an' a touch," 'e says, "of megalomania? Ye did not? Then ye will, let me inform ye, before ye're many hours older. For that," 'e says, "is what's appointed to command the *Benguela*, an' so I'm tellin' ye."

'E stoops an' picks up 'is pipe.

"Aweel!" says 'e half to himself. "It's a sair dispensation, but maybe it'll be some one else that'll 'ave the preevilege," 'e says, "of bustin' 'im one i' the snout, which is what 'e mainly requires. If there's none else, gentlemen, kindly wait until we dock again an' leave 'im to me. 'Twad be a mercy." 'E clenches a fist and looks at it very lovin'. Then there's somethin' catches 'is eye on the dock. "Losh!" 'e says all of a sudden. "If yon's no the character in question comin' doon the road now! Ye'll have to forgive me, gentlemen—I'm no in any suffeecient state o' grace to receive 'im at present. I'll see ye all later."

An' with that 'e drops down below to 'is engines again, an' Leggatt an' I turns to the gangway to meet Captain Jarvis.

'E STUMPS up it, a fat old codger with red gills an' a fringe of white whisker. It's easy enough seen that there's just one person 'e'd a snap of the fingers use for an' that's Captain William Jarvis, certified master mariner in steam. It stuck out all over 'im, an' 'is first words to us confirms the idea.

"First and third officer?" 'e says, very short, when we'd saluted an' introduced ourselves. "Then will you oblige me by informin' me, gentlemen," e' says, "what the this an' that you mean by addressin' me in the disgustin' state of slovenliness I see before me at this moment?"

'E swells out 'is cheeks like a porpoise an' glares at Leggatt an' me with red eyes. Leggatt doesn't say anything, an' I'm too surprised to, not havin' come across this type o' master before. 'E gulps once or twice an' goes on.

"When you're on my ship," says 'e, "you'll oblige me by rememberin' that you'll be properly clad, in merchant marine officer's rig, on all occasions. I shall treat any deviation from this order," 'e says, "as a personal insult, an' know how to deal with it. You'll go below now, carry out my instructions, an' report again on the bridge in fifteen minutes."

'E starts up the ladder.

"Where's the second officer?" 'e says, turning round sudden.

"Ashore, sir," Leggatt answers respectful, which is more than I could 'ave done.

"Then tell one of the apprentices to send him to me as soon as 'e returns," says Jarvis. "I'll require an explanation of why 'e's not 'ere to meet me. I'll see the engineer later," 'e adds, as we go below.

"Well, strike me blind!" I says to Leggatt as soon's we're out of 'earin.

"You wait a bit," Leggatt says. "That ain't nothin' to what 'e can do, I'm told."

"Ho!" says I. "Ain't it, then? Well, I'm more sorry for McRimmon than I can say," I says, "for I'll be deprivin' 'im of that little pleasure 'e was lookin' forward to so gay just now. If that bleatin' old baa-lamb up on the bridge gives me any more of 'is sauce, I'll—"

"No, you won't," says Leggatt. "Want to lose your ticket an' get clink as well for strikin' a senior officer? 'Cause that's what it'll be, quicker'n a wink. You cool off, cocky, an' go shove your nice new pinafore on for uncle."

'E laughs an' goes off. There's a lot in what 'e says, too. Takin' a whack at a master on 'is own bridge is a pretty expensive bit of amusement, come to think of it. So I sluices down, shaves again, puts on me best jacket an' reports on deck. Old Cockahoop gives me a cool look up an' down an' says he'll now inspect ship with Leggatt an' me. The second, Black, isn't back yet.

Well, that inspection was the nearest thing to bedlam I'd struck so far. The *Benguela* was a badly found ship, as I may 'ave 'inted already; an' she'd been at sea for a matter of three months, nosin' up an' down stinkin' river estuaries on the equator most of the time. So she wasn't anyhow what you might call spotless. But Jarvis, 'e held a court of inquiry over every scratch on the paintwork, an' let off steam louder an' louder over each new thing 'e found wrong, which was most things; and by the time 'e'd looked into the engineroom an' called for McRimmon, an' a greaser'd told him McRimmon'd gone ashore for a dram, 'e was kind of navigatin' under forced draft. Finally 'e went off with a resoundin' bang.

"Damnable!" 'e chokes. "Damnable an' disgustin'! Never saw such a state of affairs in me life! I'm now goin' straight," says 'e, "to interview the owners—an' we'll get this 'orrid condition explained. But I see the reason," says 'e. "I see it. Inefficient, dirty officers," 'e says, very nasty. "That's the reason, gentlemen. You two will remain 'ere, an' you'll not leave the ship on any account until I return."

And with that 'e stamps off. Leggatt said to me 'e didn't think 'e'd get much change out of the Israelites, an' no more did I. They weren't that kind. So we smoked for awhile, until McRimmon comes out of some hidie-hole or other of 'is. 'E was dirtier than ever, an' he'd a nice beginnin' to a jag on 'im already.

"Hutt!" says 'e, curlin' up 'is lip. "Will ye obsairve the twa gilded popinjays? Coptain Jarvis will 'ave been remonstratin' with ye on your appearance, no doubt. Well, I trust ye're duly impressed, ma young friends. There's naethin' like discipline. So I am telled."

'E put 'is finger to the side of 'is nose an' grinned at us very sarcastic. Leggatt, bein' senior, told 'im to go to 'ell for a drunken mechanic. McRimmon pulled a bottle out of 'is pocket an' took a swig of it.

"I'll no be offerin' ye any," 'e says. "Ye've to interview the coptain on 'is returrn—an' if 'e smells liquor on your

breath, ye'll be in cells before ye can spit. A verra strict teetottler, is Coptain Jarvis—when there's ony one lookin'."

'E took another gulp at 'is bottle an' went below. I wondered what was goin' to happen when 'e met Jarvis.

I'D NOT long to wonder. Jarvis comes back from interviewin' the owners, an' 'e'd got nothin' out o' them. That was clear enough from the color of 'is face as 'e came aboard. 'E said nothin' to us, an' went straight to 'is cabin. There 'e stayed till four bells, when supper was on the table in the saloon.

Leggatt an' I went down, 'avin' duly slicked up. The first thing we see there was McRimmon. 'E was one mask of oil an' grease from 'air to 'eels, sittin' down at the table, spearin' pickles out of the jar with a fork. 'E looks up as we come in.

"Guid evenin' to ye, gentlemen," says 'e, very precious. "An' hoo d'ye find yersel's this braw, bonny evenin'?"

'E spikes another pickle an' eats it, glowerin' at us out of 'is red eyes. 'E was pretty nicely lacquered.

Leggatt an' I sits down an' waits for the stooard to serve us. That's 'ow it'd been under Bates—no ceremony, excep' passin' the time o' day. But it was goin' to be different 'ere.

"Captain's orders, gennlemen," says the stooard. "Meals will not commence until 'e's present."

"An' hurroosh for Coptain Jarvis," says McRimmon very loud, gobblin' at the pickles.

Just at that minute the door opens an' in comes old Hug-me-Tight. 'E's got up regardless—stiff collar, black silk tie, buttons on 'is jacket like gold an' so on. 'E stands there lookin' at Mac with eyes standin' out like a lobster's, an' then 'e marches to the head of the table.

"What was that?" 'e snaps. Nobody says a thing, but McRimmon takes a fresh pickle an' gnaws it off the fork, blinkin' deliberate at Jarvis all the time. The skipper turns purple.

"Don't look at me like that, sir!" 'e shouts. "What the crimson so-an'-so d'ye mean, actin' the pig at my saloon table? You're filthy, sir. What the devil are you, anyway? Steward," 'e says in a ravin' passion, "remove that person!"

The stooard hesitates, knowin' McRimmon and his little ways. Mac puts the fork down.

"Ye dom ram nosed auld billy-goat!" 'e says to Jarvis. "Pit a stockin' in yer foolish mouth an' sit doon tae yer victuals like a man. I'm McRimmon," says 'e' "that's chief engineer 'ere, an' worth fufty of ye, as I'll be pleased to demonstrate verra satisfactorily if ye'll step on deck a wee whilie. An' what's more," says 'e, goin' for the pickles again, "I've had the honor of servin' under ye before, Coptain Jarvis. 'Twas on the *Belfast Lassie*—the vessel they put ye off of, Coptain, for bein' a silly auld blethererer an' antagonizin' yer officers. Maybe ye'll have forgot it," 'e says, "but I've no forgot, Coptain Jarvis; so champ on that awhile, ma mannie. An' noo," says 'e, "after yon wee preleeminary exordium, let's eat, sirs. Coptain Jarvis, allow me to assist ye to a pickle. They're grond!"

And 'e shoves the jar across the table with 'is mucky paws. It was pretty near empty, anyhow.

Well, you never saw nothin' like Jarvis' face. When Mac began on 'im, I thought 'e'd strangle; but when 'e came to the bit about the *Belfast Lassie*—it was true enough, as I discovered later—there was a mighty quick change about 'im. 'E stood there without sayin' a word, but garglin' in 'is throat like 'e'd somethin' there 'e wanted to get out an' couldn't. Then 'e whips round on 'is heel an' out o' the saloon with 'im.

Mac laughs.

"An' thot's the beginnin'," 'e says. "But I've one worrd for ye all, chaps. That bit o' skirmishin' won't solve the problem we've before us. We'll e'en have to devise more artistic measures for Cop-

tain William Jarvis," says 'e, showin' his teeth very 'orrible to see.

An' that was all I could get out of 'im just then.

About eight o'clock that night I went ashore for a turn. Jarvis had gone himself, leavin' word that we'd his gracious permission to spend the evenin' as we liked. I reckon 'e was chewin' over the row 'e'd had with the owners, an' maybe pullin' strings to try an' get shet of McRimmon. Anyhow, what 'e was doin' didn't worry me none. I took a stroll through the streets, lookin' for somethin' to do.

By an' by, who'd I see comin' out of a bar but McRimmon? 'E was just the same as ever, only a bit more illuminated. 'E sees me an' comes over.—

"Challis," says 'e, solemn, "it's an evil worrld, as I believe I may 'ave signified to ye before; but there's yet whisky, laddie. Will ye do me the favor of accompanyin' me on my wanderin's hither an' yon the nicht? I need society," says 'e, "for to take the taste of yon overgrown auld cauliflower out o' ma mouth."

Well, I'd no objection, an' we pursued our investigations into the class of sperrits prevailin' on Liverpool dockside. McRimmon didn't say very much. He was layin' the keel of what looked to be a solid drunk, an' I'd seen him that way already. All he wanted was to be let alone an' 'ave some one 'andy to navigate 'im 'ome when affairs overtook 'im.

In awhile, though, 'e stops all of a sudden as we was goin' down a lighted street. There's a big board outside a place, an' an inscription on it in red paint. Mac puts 'is head on one side and looks at it owlish for a minute. The inscription said: "Professor Crypto. The world famed hypnotic master: Spellbinding. Magnetic. Come in an' see demonstrated the power of the human eye." An' underneath, in flarin' capitals, "Five shillings forfeited to any one not succumbing in ten minutes."

The admission was a shilling an' I heard Mac mutterin' to himself. Then 'e says:

"Man, it's a gift, an' ye'd be criminal to refuse. Who are ye, onyway, to look sideways at the manifest bounties o' Providence? Come, Challis, let's e'en look a wee bittie further into yon. There's money in it."

An' with that 'e planks down a couple o' bob, an' in we goes. There was a feller sittin' at a table inside—a skinny lookin' cove with very black eyes an' a beak of a big nose. 'E's got some kind of a long robe on 'im, an' 'e's engaged very desperate, starin' into a round glass ball on the table.

Mac walks up to 'im.

"Are ye Professor Crypto?" 'e asks. The man looks up in a minute, blinkin'.

"I am," 'e says. "Do you desire a session?"

"Ye're dom right," Mac says. "Fire ahead, an' let's see the color of your five shullin's."

'E sits down in a chair an' the Professor starts in on 'im. I dunno if you've ever seen any of these hypnotism affairs, but you c'n take it from me they're creepy. The lights goes down, all but one that's focused on the Professor's pasty white face an' the big black eyes.

"Look at me!" 'e says to McRimmon.

Mac takes a grip o' the arms of the chair an' stares at 'im obstinate. Then the Professor starts to make passes in the air, mysterious, an' by an' by Mac's eye begins to glaze.

" 'Ere!" I says. "What's all this?"

"It's all right," says Crypto, laughin'. " 'E'es off now until I release him. Anything special you'd like to 'ave 'im do?"

Now I'd 'ad one or two already, an' I was feelin' sort of humorous, anyway; an' the sight of Sandy McRimmon sittin' in that chair like a greasy old idol must 'ave set me off. So I suggests some things that 'e might do for our benefit, such as gettin' down on 'is 'ands an' knees an' barkin' like a dog, standin' on 'is 'ead an' that sort of thing. Childish, but amusin', an' the Professor an'

me got a lot o' quiet fun out of it. McRimmon was properly away, an' went through the whole rigmarole without makin' any fuss at all. It was uncanny, I tell you—if it 'adn't been so damn funny.

All at once, 'ere comes a great 'ammerin' at the door, an' a tramplin' of feet. The Professor turns even paler than 'e was.

"Dammit!" says 'e, agitated. "What's all this?" 'E runs to the window an' takes a squint out. "The police!" says 'e. "Excuse me, gentlemen—I'll 'ave to be goin'."

An' 'e rips off 'is gown, switches out the light, an' away with 'im out of the back door quick as kiss-me-'and.

The door's bust in front by this time, an' a fat sergeant with a couple of coppers comes in.

"Wot's this?" 'e says, turnin' up the lights an' lookin' down at McRimmon, that was 'oppin' across the floor, frog fashion. "Where's that Crypto? We want 'im."

" 'E's gone," I says. "Skipped out the back. Seems like 'e was expectin' this."

"Maybe," says the sergeant. " 'E's down for a dose of skilly as a rogue an' a vagabond. You two," 'e says to the coppers, "out behind an' find 'im. Meanwhile," says 'e, officious, "I'll trouble you two to explain yourselves. Ship's officers, I see. Ought to know better."

Well, I'd a pleasant five minutes then in lots o' ways. First, I'd to get it into that peeler's thick skull that we wasn't rogues an' vagabonds too. Then I'd to wake McRimmon up. An' you'd be surprised to 'ear that Scotchman's language when 'e found himself on the floor. There wasn't a name 'e didn't call the Professor, an' me too; but what seemed to get 'im worst of all was the five shillin's 'e'd missed gettin'.

At last I got 'im away, ravin' an' carryin' on somethin' tremendous, an' about midnight, after I'd pacified 'im with a lot more drinks, we goes back to the ship an' turns in.

An' that [said Challis] is the first 'alf of the story. If you'd care to 'ear the rest—why, thankye, I will. Another o' the same, miss . . .

TWO days later we'd loaded an' put to sea. Old Hightytighty was just as full of 'imself as ever, except maybe with McRimmon. 'E didn't do much throwin' chests there, although Mac wasn't mentionin' the *Belfast Lassie* at all. But Sandy McRimmon wasn't alterin' 'is ways either—Jarvis knew better than to try that game with 'im twice—an' every night in the saloon there 'e sat, grease from truck to keelson, while the rest of us 'ad to be got up like bloomin' admirals of the fleet. Jarvis took it out on our skins, because 'e wasn't in any ways afraid of us; but Mac was a different business altogether.

Beyond mealtimes, we didn't see a lot of Mac the first few days out. 'E let on that the *Benguela's* engines were givin' 'im more'n usual of a bother, an' kept out o' sight. 'E said nothin' more to me about Professor Crypto an' the way 'e'd been 'ad, an' I thought 'e was sulkin' over it, for Mac wasn't the sort to take anything lyin' down, whether it was bullyin' from Jarvis or bein' done in the eye by a mountebank. It seemed to me, too, that 'e might 'ave been a lot more sniffy if 'e'd known some o' the things I'd made 'im do while 'e was under the influence, as you might say. 'Owever, 'e didn't know, an' I wasn't goin' to tell 'im—not me.

Morning of the third day we was round about the top of the Bay, rollin' as usual fit to rupture you, an' now an' then takin' one green over the bows, when Leggatt calls me aside.

"Challis," says 'e, "there's somethin' fishy on board 'ere."

"Ho?" I says. "An' 'ow d'ye make that out?"

'E looks at me kind of odd.

"Noticed anything about Mac?" 'e asks.

"Nothin' special," I says, "except that

'e seems to have put old Jarvis in 'is place. Pity the rest of us couldn't work it—this spit-an'-polish business is givin' me the pip."

"All right," says Leggatt. "You ain't noticed nothin'. You just keep an eye liftin' on Mac an' let me know if you see anythin' odd about 'im. Don't tell any one else. I b'lieve the old devil's got somethin' up 'is sleeve."

I went away an' began to watch the engineers as far as me dooties let me, an' sure enough there was somethin' goin' on. The whole lot of 'em was goin' about bottled up like, keepin' themselves to themselves, an' whisperin' now an' then in corners. That kind of thing shows up on shipboard, o' course, an' it didn't take me long to check Leggatt's observations. I went back to 'im.

"You're right," I says.

"'Course I'm right. But the question is, just what's 'e playin' at?"

"Better let 'im alone—'e's a bad customer to cross."

"That be damned!" says Leggatt, gettin' on 'is 'igh'orse. "I'm first officer of this dust bin, an' as such," 'e says, "I propose to investigate. Why, damme, I ain't goin' to 'ave Mac in on somethin' an' leave me out! D'you agree, Mr. Challis?"

'Twasn't any use goin' to Mac straight out, of course. Might just as well tackle an oyster, if 'e didn't want to tell you things. So the two of us went to work an' took the *Benguela* to pieces, unobstrusive like, an' without treadin' on Mac's corns; an' that evenin' I ran across somethin' that made me sit up.

I was off duty an' supposed to be takin' a caulk in my cabin. Leggatt was on the bridge with Jarvis, an' Black the Second down on the forward well-deck with the port watch restowin' some stuff that'd fetched adrift. Outside them, the *Benguela* was pretty quiet, an' I mooched around, keepin' me eyes open an' pretendin' to be admirin' the view.

Just as I was passin' the galley some one comes out an' bumps into me. It was a kid of an apprentice Mac 'ad in the engineroom that trip, an' he was carryin' a big bowl of tea an' a 'unk of bread an' meat.

"Hullo!" I says. "Where are you goin' with all that stuff, young 'un? In a 'urry, ain't ye?"

"P-please, sir," says 'e, nervous, "it's for Mr. McRimmon."

"Oh, it is, is it?" I says. "Then it's news to me that the chief scoffs stuff like that. Try again, sonny. You robbin' the galley? Is that it?"

I kicks the door open. The cook's inside, gettin' supper.

"What's all this?" I says to 'im, pointin' at the grub the boy's got.

The cook shuffles.

"Mr. McRimmon's orders, sir," 'e says, eyein' me hostile.

"No, you don't," I tells 'im. "'Ow long's this been goin' on, Jenks?"

After a lot more prevaricatin', 'e tells me I'd better refer to the chief if I want any further information on the subject. I knew from that that there was plenty more true than tellable, so I took the boy by the ear an' marched off to see Mac himself.

He spotted me comin' down the ladder.

"Out o' my engineroom!" says 'e, but there was a half twinkle in his old eye. "I'm 'avin' no loons off the bridge down 'ere!"

"You ain't, eh?" says I. "Then will you kindly explain what you mean by keepin' a dog on board, Mr. McRimmon, without Captain Jarvis' consent. D'ye tell me that stuff ain't for a dog? Drinks tea, too, Mr. McRimmon, I see. Odd kind of a dog, eh?"

For a minute Mac stands lookin' from me to the victuals an' from the victuals to me an' back again. Then 'e chuckles an' sends the boy away.

"Aweel," 'e says, "I'm no sayin' it isn't about time, maybe. I was goin' to send for you an' Leggatt tonight, but now's as good. Come wi' me."

'E takes the food an' goes off down into one of the forward bunkers. There's

about 'alf the coal gone, an' an electric's rigged there. Sittin' on a folded blanket, black with coal dust an' lookin' like the devil, is Professor Crypto, eyes an' all. 'E pretty near give me the 'orrors in that light.

"Good Lord love a duck!" I says. "What in the name of Beelzebub are you doin' 'ere?"

The man looks at me an' grins, an' Mac answers for 'im.

"It's verra simple," says 'e. "It'll no have escaped your recollection, Mr. Challis, that on the last occasion ye saw the Professor 'e was involved in a wee misunderstandin' with the Liverpool police."

"True," I says. "What's that got to do with it?"

"Everything, ma mannie," Mac says. "Them Liverpool baboons, as ye know, are no just exactly the most congenial company for men of attainment an' education," says 'e, "like me an' our good friend 'ere. So the Professor, findin' their attentions a wee bit ower pressin', e'en bethocht himself of a sea voyage for 'is 'ealth. An' by a verra curious coincidence," says 'e, lookin at me highly old fashioned, " 'twas the *Benguela* 'e chose for that pairpose."

"Stowed away, eh?" I says.

"Muster Challis," says Mac, "if ye'll allow me to say so, ye're a most pairspicuous young officer. Ye should go far. Ye've hit it exactly. Now—what d'ye propose to do about it?"

"Do?" I says. "Report him to the master, of course." I was beginnin' to see somethin' 'ere.

"An' a credit to ye too!" says Mac hearty. "Ye'll cerrtainly go far, Muster Challis. But," says 'e, "in ma cabin above I've a verra delightful bottle o' Glenlivet I'd be proud for ye to sample, this evenin' after supper. We'll ask Muster Leggatt to share it with us, at that. An' in the meantime," 'e says, alterin' 'is tone, "ye wall eyed, cocked up young squirt, if ye presume to mention one worrd of what ye've seen 'ere to yon paradin' bubblyjock that's on the bridge —before I give ye the office—I'll pluck ye in bits an' feed ye to No. 2 furnace wi' ma ain hands. D'ye get me, Muster Challis?"

"I do," I says. "Perfectly."

Supper that evenin' in the saloon was a bit of a trial, knowin' what I did, particular as Jarvis was more than usual ostrobogulous. McRimmon didn't show up, which was wise maybe, but sent word that 'e was detained below over some new kind o' bellyache the *Benguela* 'ad developed. Jarvis gobbled some nasty remark or other about incompetent engineers, but otherwise there wasn't anything said. As usual we finished eatin' in quick time an' I went round to Mac's cabin. Leggatt followed.

"Now," says Mac, pourin' out three half tumblers of whisky, "Muster Challis, will ye inform the firrst officer of the shockin' spectacle with which ye were confronted below this evenin'?"

I told Leggatt an' he whistled.

"Whew!" 'e said. "What'll the Old Man say?"

McRimmon leaned forward an' tapped him on the knee.

"Muster Leggatt," 'e says, "I dinna think ye've enough information before ye at present to enable ye to appreciate possibeelities. The gentleman that's settin' below at this moment, among the verra inferior coal which is all we're supplied wi', is none other than the celebrated Professor Crypto—" and 'e went on tellin' Leggatt all about the doin's in Liverpool before we sailed.

"Well?" says Leggatt. "What about it?"

McRimmon groaned.

"Guid losh!" says 'e. "The minds of some o' ye Southrons! Man, ye're slow! Listen now—" and 'e gave Leggatt an interestin' but mostly incomplete account of what'd 'appened to him when 'e'd been hypnotized by this Crypto. "An' if ye dinna see the connection between that," 'e ends up, "an' our beloved superior officer, ye're even less gleg than I gave ye credit for, Muster Leggatt—an' that's sayin' a verra great

deal for a mon o' my reticence."

Leggatt looks at 'im with 'is jaw dropped.

"But—but," 'e stammers. "Good Lord, man, it's mutiny!"

"Mutiny be dommed!" says McRimmon. "Whaur's the mutiny? It's just the exercise of a highly curious gift—an' the man's no even a member o' the crew. Of course," 'e says, looking sideways at Leggatt, "if you're afraid—"

Leggatt jumps up.

"No whisky soakin' Scotchman's callin' me that," says 'e. "I'm with you."

"Set ye doon, then, mannie, set ye doon," McRimmon says. "There's plenty to be considered. Challis, just you 'earken to me—"

BRIGHT an' early in the mornin', after 'e'd taken 'is breakfast an' enjoyed himself criticizin' the Second's shave—Black was a neat little man an' I thought 'e'd 'ave 'ad apoplexy—old Bag o' Lard was on the bridge, smokin' a fat cigar with the band on, an' frownin' very magnificent. The *Benguela* was rollin' along as usual, lookin' like a frowsy old woman that's 'ad a drop or two too much, an' creakin' an' complainin' peevish in every rivet. We was somewhere comin' out o' the Bay now, with the Spanish coast out o' sight on our port beam, an' Gibraltar thirty-six hours ahead.

McRimmon sticks 'is 'ead up the engineroom ladder an' winks at me. That was the signal we'd arranged for touching things off, an' I went below in a hurry, with a "Yes, Mr. McRimmon?" for Jarvis' benefit above.

Two minutes later I come on deck, lookin' startled an' grave, an' up the bridge ladder with me.

"Beg pardon, Captain Jarvis, sir," I says. 'E looks at me, blowin' out his silly old cheeks.

"Yes?" he says pompous. "What is it?"

"If you please, sir," I says, 'esitatin' an' doubtful, "it's just been reported to me that there's a stowaway on board."

"A what?" 'E jumps as if some one stuck a pin in 'im.

"A stowaway, sir."

Well, you never saw anything like the way that ridic'lous bundle of conceit carried on.

"A stowaway!" 'e ends up at last. "On my ship! That's what comes of 'avin' a parcel of nincompoops for officers, Mr. Challis. Go below at once an' fetch 'im up to me. Fetch Mr. McRimmon, too. I've a word or so to say to 'im. This is 'is fault."

I went down an' there was Mac, grinnin' to 'imself as if 'e was seein' somethin' that pleased 'im a lot. Crypto was with 'im, an' 'e'd been let into the know, too, for 'e was grinnin' as well; an' 'e'd done somethin' to them gashly black eyes of 'is that made 'em look worse than ever.

"Skipper wants to see 'im," I says, official. "You too, Mr. McRimmon."

Mac grunts, 'appy.

"Lead on!" 'e says, an' we goes up.

Jarvis is pacin' up an' down the bridge, threatenin' to bust into flames at any minute, by the look of 'im. Leggatt's there as well. The skipper swings round on Crypto, soon as 'e's at the top of the ladder.

"What the 'ell's the meanin' of all this?" 'e roars, stabbin' at 'im with 'is forefinger. "What are you doin' aboard 'ere, you?"

Crypto don't say a word, only stands there fixin' 'im with 'is eye. A shockin' lookin' sight 'e was, best o' times; but now, after three days in Mac's coal bunker, 'e looked like sin served cold, an' I didn't wonder at Jarvis bein' kind o' fascinated with 'im.

"Well?" the skipper goes on, blindin' an' stiffin' as usual. "What 'ave ye got to say for yourself, ye ugly swine? An' don't look at me like that—don't look at me—don't look at me—don't look . . ."

'Is voice trails off just like that, an' there's an expression on 'is face I'd seen

once before, on Mac's back in Liverpool. Puzzled, kind of, an' wantin' to tear 'imself away but not bein' able to. For a minute maybe—a long time anyway—'e stands bubblin' an' fumin' so; an' then, so's you could almost 'ear the click, 'e changes 'is tune.

"But after all," says 'e, rubbin' 'is eyes—'im that's been threatenin' Crypto with cells an' murder for fifteen minutes—"but after all, gentlemen, I s'pose there's much to be said for this unfortunate fellow. My good man," says 'e, fair beamin' now, so that I 'eard a wicked chuckle behind me, "you must be extremely fatigued. Hungry, too, no doubt. Good Lord, gentlemen," says 'e, "three days in a coal bunker! Imagine it. Terrible—terrible."

'E's still followin' Crypto's eyes, an' there's an expression on 'is face like a sheep's; foolish an' bewildered, if you get me. Crypto never says a word still; only looks at 'im.

Jarvis claps 'im on the shoulder.

"Why, me dear fellow," 'e says, "this'll never do. I can't let you remain in this state a moment longer. If you'll come to my cabin," says 'e, "we'll see what we can do toward fittin' you out with some clothes; mine'll be a bit big for you, but no doubt one o' these excellent officers of mine—" 'e looks round at us, very benevolent—"will oblige. I can count on you, gentlemen, eh? I thought so. An' then we must give you some breakfast."

You might 'ave 'eard a pin drop on that bridge. This was Jarvis talkin'—Jarvis, that nobody'd ever 'eard with a decent word for a dog, an' that 'alf the *Benguela's* crew would've slung overside cheerful that very minute. Leggatt an' I just opened our mouths like fish, Mac chuckled again, an' the man at the wheel was that flabbergasted 'e took 'is eye off the card an' let the *Benguela* swing so that a green sea walloped over the weather bow an' pretty near drowned little Black, that was still monkeyin' with the cargo forward.

He was a 'ot tempered cuss, Black, an' skipper or no skipper on the bridge, 'e wasn't goin' to stand this.

"Wheel!" 'e yells, cuppin' 'is 'ands. "What the Judas d'ye think you're playin' at, ye son of a soldier? 'Old a course, can't ye?"

Jarvis 'ears 'im an' steps to the rail.

"Mr. Black," says 'e most polite, "will you step 'ere a moment, if you please?"

Black stares like the rest of us. 'E's never 'eard the Old Man talk this way before. Then 'e drops what 'e's doin' an' runs up the ladder.

The skipper chucks the butt of 'is cigar overside. 'E's able to look away from Crypto now an' then, by this, but every minute or so 'e's got to shift 'is eyes back again.

"Gentlemen," 'e says to us, "I don't like to 'ear all this damnin' an' blastin' of the crew goin' on. They're men, gentlemen, the same as you an' me, an' none of us 'as got any license to talk to them any way but decent. Let's 'ave a little more 'umanity an' less bullyraggin'. An' now, me dear chap," 'e says to the stowaway, "I'll take you to my cabin for a clean up, an' then we'll 'ave the steward get you a breakfast in the saloon. Consider yourself my guest."

The two of 'em went below, an' the lot of us on the bridge got our breath after a minute. Mac begins to laugh out loud.

"What did I tell ye?" 'e sniggers. "Now let that red nosed auld hippopotamus look to 'imself! I'm just beginnin' with 'im, frien's!"

Black scratches 'is 'ead.

"What the devil's all this?" 'e asks. "Is the old coot crazy?"

"Crazy?" Mac takes him up. "Na, no that I ken. It's my belief—Muster McRimmon—that our worthy commander's seen a great light. An' ye'll remember 'is instructions in regaird to profane sweerin' an' blasphemin', won't ye, Muster Black? 'They'r men, same as you an' me,' wasn't it, Muster Black? Ye've to employ 'umanity with them—an' I'm sure I wish ye joy of the job!"

Black scowls.

"I'll see 'im a lot further first," 'e says.

" 'E's a thorough-goin' lunatic."

"Verra guid, Muster Black," says McRimmon, "if yon's the way ye feel about it. But dinna say ye werena warned."

At four bells word's passed for all hands. There's Jarvis on the bridge, with Crypto beside him full of eggs an' bacon an' smokin' a cigar. 'E's got up in Leggatt's shore togs, Leggatt 'avin' been prevailed upon to contribute 'em after seein' that Crypto'd been well scoured.

The crew lines up in the welldeck, engineroom an' all, an' Jarvis makes 'em a speech. I've 'eard some queer things at sea, but never anything to beat that.

There's a new an' glorious era dawnin' in the merchant service, 'e says, an' it's startin' right away on the *Benguela*. The men—an' 'e asks their pardon for so callin' them—will in future carry out their officer's suggestions instead of obeyin' orders; an' the officers will at all times 'ave the comfort an' convenience of their men at 'eart. There's a lot more like this—an' 'e ends up by announcin' that from two bells in the afternoon watch that day there'll be a general 'oliday on board the *Benguela*.

"An' I trust, gentlemen," 'e says to us, "that you'll see to it that every one is entertained in as interestin' a manner as possible under the circumstances." 'E dismisses the men, that's all took aback, as well they might be. Then 'e says to us again, "If you'll step down to the saloon, gentlemen, you'll find a little light refreshment there. It's my own contribution," 'e says, "to the success of this 'appy day."

If you'll believe me, 'e'd Scotch an' cigars laid out there, for even if 'e was strict T. T. for others, 'e did himself mighty proud as a general rule. Still, this was the first time in 'istory 'e'd been seen to offer any one sup or draw, an' we drinks 'is very good 'ealth. Even Black joins in that, an' McRimmon, the hypocrite, makes a speech that brings tears to Jarvis' eyes.

It was all very affectin', I give you me word.

WELL, at two bells, as ordered, the 'oliday starts. Mac stops engines, an' the *Benguela* lays wallowin' about in the rollers. I don't know whether you've ever seen a vessel stopped deliberate on the high seas, but she's a barmy lookin' object—all forlorn, as you might say, an' not knowin' where to turn next. But what she looked from outside was nothin' at all to what she was in.

First of all, old Sugar-an'-Spice says there'll be a sing-song. That'd be all very well if 'e wasn't dealin' with the broken down crimp's delights we 'ad for a crew. They sits about the deck, mooney, an' wonderin' what in 'ell or out of it was the meanin' of all this. Jarvis tells 'em to sing. Of course, no one does. Then 'e gets hold of one o' them by the shoulder an' stands 'im up so's the others can see 'im.

"Sing, now, me man," says 'e. "Just to start things off."

Well, the feller looks about 'im an' grins silly-like. An' then 'e starts to sing.

You may have observed that some of our deck melodies—the kind you don't 'ear in port—ain't exactly what you might call drawin' room ballads. This was one o' them, if you'll understand—the sort that bubbles the pitch in the deck seams an' stuns the seabirds.

That starts it, naturally, an' the rest of that sing-song would 'ave made you cry. It was wicked. Jarvis stands there on the bridge, laughin' like a lunatic an' wavin' 'is 'ands in time to the music.

After maybe half an hour of this an idea seems to strike 'im.

"Mr. Leggatt," says 'e to the First. "There's somethin' lackin'. Does it occur to you that what's really needed to make a success of this little party," 'e says, "is liquid refreshment?"

"It 'adn't struck me, sir," says Leggatt, doubtful.

"Well, I think that's what we must 'ave," says the Old Man. "Our owners, Gobbless'em, ain't got the common decency to provide for such things. Just like 'em. So we can't do the right thing

out o' the ship's stores. An' my own little cellar," 'e says, "wouldn't go ten minutes among that lot." He squints at Leggatt. "But," says 'e, "if I'm not mistaken, there's somethin' on the manifest that'll do our business. There's forty cases of squareface in No. 1 hold. Oblige me, Mr. Leggatt, by 'avin' a couple of cases broke out."

Leggatt's jaw drops a foot.

"But that's cargo, sir," 'e says.

"And what if it is?" Jarvis jumps on him. "Who cares? If I'm not supplied with the common requirements of nature, Mr. Leggatt, then I've authority—or if I 'aven't I'll take it—to furnish 'em myself. An' I'll break cargo for that purpose an' charge it to the ship. An' to blazes," 'e says, "with the owners!"

Well, Leggatt tries to argue with 'im, but it's no use. Finally 'e refuses flat to do what 'e's told. In old times 'e'd have been locked up inside three seconds; but as it is Jarvis only pats 'im on the back an' goes off an' does it 'imself, with a detail of the crew 'elpin' him most enthusiastic. They gets out the two cases—Jarvis 'ad the sense not to get any more—an' pretty soon it's bein' passed round among the hands. Jarvis calls the stooard an' gets a table set on the bridge, with more Scotch an' cigars. Then 'e goes to the rail very genial, with 'is glass in 'is hand, an' drinks the crew's very good santy. There's a lot of hootin' an' laughin' at that, and it don't sound a bit good to me.

The three of us, Leggatt, Black and me, goes to McRimmon.

"Look here, Mac," says Leggatt, "there's about enough of this. Call that fellow of yours off, or we'll be 'avin' merry 'ell on this vessel."

" 'Ell?" says Mac, vicious. "There's no a condeetion of affairs I'd sooner see aboard 'ere. It's verra appropriate to yon prancin' auld deevil yonder. Na—I'll no call the Professor off—no until we're in Gibraltar. An' then," 'e says, "I'll be seein' Coptain Jarvis goin' ashore in 'andcuffs."

"You fool!" Leggatt says. "Can't you see that you'll 'ave the whole boilin' of these tramps blind in an hour? Gibraltar? You'll never see Gibraltar this way. Run down is more like it—we're bang in a sea lane."

"Aweel," says McRimmon. "There's ma last worrd on it, Muster Mate!" An' 'e goes off to where Crypto's helpin' the skipper dish out gin to the crew.

The three of us looks at each other. This was gettin' a mighty long way beyond a joke. We'd our tickets to think about.

"Well, gentlemen," Leggatt says, "there's your clever little scheme for you!"

"You can count me out of that," says Black, 'arshly. "I wasn't let in on this at all."

"No, you weren't," says Leggatt. "An' you can tell that to the Board of Trade at the inquiry."

"Well, I'm goin' to stop it," says Black. "I don't know what you're goin' to do, but as far as I'm concerned Jarvis is crazy this minute. Look at 'im—will you look at 'im!"

'E'd got 'is coat off by now, the skipper, an' 'e was swimmin' round among the 'ands, a whisky-an'-soda in 'is fist, swappin' stories with 'em by the look o' things. McRimmon an' Crypto were standin' by, very close, Mac grinnin' away in his poisonous fashion, an' the Professor enjoyin' himself keepin' Jarvis well under, I reckon. It was a bad sight, I don't mind tellin' you. It didn't need more than some other vessel to spot the *Benguela* loose on the high seas an' come over for a look, to 'ave a first class scandal out o' this. An' there wasn't much doubt what that'd mean for all of us deck officers.

"What d'you suggest, Mister?" says Black, when Leggatt 'alted 'im from doin' something rash.

Leggatt scratches his head.

"It's damned hard—" 'e begins.

Now I'd been turnin' the thing over in my 'ead while they'd been talkin', an' I'd an idea all of a sudden.

"Will you let me try something?" I

asks. "Just a little idea."

"What is it?" they both of 'em says.

I told what I'd in me mind. Leggatt chuckles, although Black, I could see, didn't like it.

"All right," says Leggatt at last. "Go ahead. We'll back you."

MAC was still laughin' like a hyena an' nudgin' Crypto now an' then to start Jarvis in on somethin' more loony an' entertainin' than ever.

"Eh!" 'e says when 'e sees me. "An' noo, Muster Challis, what d'ye think of the skipper of the *Benguela?* An edifyin' spectacle, is it no?"

"Very," says I. "But y'know, the trouble with you, Mac, is that you don't realize your opportunities."

"What d'ye mean, ye young whelp?" Mac flares out. "I'd have ye know—"

"Shut up!" I says to 'im. "An' listen a minute. You've got the best chance of makin' a real fool of Jarvis any man'll ever have, an'," I says, "you're just fritterin' it away, the pair of you."

McRimmon cocks his wicked old head on one side and squints at me.

"Let's 'ear," he says. "There's a de'il of a lot o' talk out o' you. Spit it oot, ma bonnie man!"

"Well," I says, "if you want to make him look a proper lunatic, why don't you put him thorugh some of his capers—I mean the sort of thing Crypto tried on you in Liverpool. Might as well make a good job of it while you're about it. But this 'e's doing now is just plain silly."

"Guid 'evens!" says Mac, fallin' for it. "Oot o' the mouths of babes, aye, an' sucklings, Professor! D'ye hear what this mannie's suggestin'?"

Crypto grins.

"I 'ear," 'e says. "Good idea, too. Let's start, shall we?"

"Start away," I tells him. "Somethin' the same performance as Mr. McRimmon 'ere gave—you remember."

"I remember," 'e says, an' Mac looks at 'im sudden, as if somethin'd just struck him. 'Owever, it was too late for 'im to do anything about it, for Crypto calls, "Captain Jarvis!"

The old boy turns round, glass in hand.

"Well, sir," 'e says, very amiable. "Can I serve you at all?"

"Why, yes, Captain," says Crypto. "It's been suggested to me by a deputation of your officers that a short turn by your honored self would be appreciated by every one. I've no doubt, Captain, that there's any amount of latent talent in you. Won't you amuse us now for awhile. A little acrobatics, shall we say?"

'E'd got Jarvis fixed good an' tight with that eye of 'is, an' the old chap couldn't look away.

"Why, sir," 'e says, "if that's the case, I'll certainly do my best to entertain you. It's some little time since I—ah, went in for anything of this sort, but—yes, I'll do my best."

An' with that he strips down his suspenders an' turns a somersault, very slow an' dignified.

Every one roared, of course—even Leggatt an' Black an' me'd a hard job to keep a straight face. Old Tiddlewinks comes right side up, puffin' an' pantin', an' looks round him—for applause, I've no doubt. 'E got it.

"Excellent!" says Crypto. "An' now," 'e says, steppin' out an' handin' Jarvis to 'is feet, "suppose we try somethin' else, Captain. The splits, now?"

Well, the old boy done it, but I thought 'e'd have bust or 'ad apoplexy. There 'e sits on the deck, purple in the face an' grinnin' very silly, while the crew shouts an' yells worse than ever. You never 'eard or see anything like it.

I took a peep at Mac. 'E was standin' apart with 'is arms folded on 'is chest, lookin' on, an' there was an expression on 'is face I'd not seen there before. Crypto tells Jarvis to jump like a frog up an' down the deck, an' Jarvis does it, an' Mac slides over to me.

"Challis," says 'e behind his 'and in a 'oarse whisper, "is yon ye said true?"

"What's that?" I asks 'im.

"Did thot kipper gutted fraud do sic-can things tae me in Liverpool?"

"'Course 'e did," I says, an' I knew that the little scheme was comin' off. Then, just as Mac was beginnin' to say 'is prayer backward, I give 'im the finishin' touch. "But of course," I says, "Jarvis ain't near as funny as what you were, Mac."

'E swings round to where the skipper's now doin' 'is best to stand on 'is bald old 'ead, with Crypto encouraging him 'an the crew fair roarin'. Then 'e makes one dive for the Professor, with 'is fists whirlin', an' fair foamin' at the mouth.

"Ye crawlin', consecrated blastie!" 'e yells. "I'll learn ye to play tricks like yon on me! Ye wad offer, eh? Tak' thot!" An' with that 'e knocks Crypto stone-cold into the scuppers an' falls on top of 'im, maulin' most tremendous.

There's a dead silence for a minute. Then—just like that—here's a bellow like a foghorn. It's Jarvis, an' the influence is off of 'im.

"Great jumping Joseph!" 'e roars. "What the devil's this? What the devil in 'ell's this bobbery? Wh-where in blazes am I?"

He looks down at himself, covered in tar from the deck, 'alf naked an' with 'is pants split across. Then 'e sees the crew, that's most of them nicely thankye by now, an' lyin' about like a parcel of hogs. 'E gives one squint at them, sees Leggatt, Black an' myself standin' by for trouble, an' Mac still hammerin' Crypto in the scuppers; and then 'e makes one flyin' jump for the bridge.

"On deck there!" 'e howls, an' there ain't no lovin' kindness in that 'owl, neither. "Get forrard, all of ye! Mr. Leggatt, Mr. Black, Mr. Challis—drive those swabs out of my sight! Mr. McRimmon, leave that man alone and go to your cabin. I'll see you later. My sacred soul, can't I keep discipline on my own ship!"

It was the old touch, right enough, an' there was a scramble to get forward an' out of sight. Jarvis sees the *Benguela's* stopped—I don't b'lieve 'e'd known it up to then. He rings to slow ahead—Mac'd left his second in charge—an' the *Benguela* begins to move. Jarvis dives into his cabin.

Three minutes later 'e comes out again, dressed as usual, very proper an' precise.

"Officers on the bridge, please!" 'e calls down to us—'im that'd never said please to no one in 'is life. Not in that tone.

We looks at one another an' goes up.

* * *

Challis' tankard was dry. There was that dreamy look on his face that I have come to know as heralding the end of the story.

"Well," I asked impatiently, "what happened?"

"Nothin' much," said Challis with his odd smile.

"He gave Mac a private tellin' off that must 'ave been worth goin' miles to 'ear, for it got under Mac's thick Scotch hide an' 'e was sweatin' big drops an' blue about the nose at the end of it. Then 'e shoved Crypto ashore in Gib an' I'm not a bit sure 'e didn't pay 'is fare on from there, wherever 'e wanted to go. An' lastly 'e give a dinner in the saloon in Gib an' talked to us for ten minutes after it, standin' dignified at the head of 'is table.

"Followin' that, I don't think I need say more than that we all served under Jarvis two years more—Mac an' all—an' an 'appier ship I'd trouble you to find.

"Yes, I might say I've a weakness for stowaways after that business, mister. Jarvis? Oh, the *Benguela* fell to bits in the end, an' 'e's growin' roses in Southport. I see him now an' again. Might drop over an' call on 'im tonight. Care to come?"

"I certainly would," I said, rising.

Challis stretched himself and went across the quay to the *Levuka,* enormous in the evening light.

NOTES FROM A

Niger Trading Station

By T. SAMSON MILLER

A BUSHMAN came in with a small reed basket attached to his girdle. He took from the basket two ticks and put them on his chest, to feed there. These ticks are one of the worst evils of the tropics. They cause a recurrent fever, for which medical science has found no remedy as yet. The bushman was practising the theory of vaccination, innoculating himself with the fever germ and producing anti-toxin in his blood.

One wonders if our great medical practitioners might not be able to learn as much, or at least a great deal, from a study of native preventives as from laboratory research.

* * *

Captain B— said there wasn't a buzzard in the sky when he shot the hippo; and in ten minutes they made a screaming cloud above the carcass. The blacks had to fight them off while they hacked away the flesh. "The birds winged up from all quarters, as if they had heard a bugle call. They couldn't have seen the kill, they couldn't have scented the kill. The creatures must have some sixth sense," said the captain.

An ivory dealer suspended operations on the whiskey bottle to growl:

"Hell, Africa's full of such mysteries. I was following ivory in the Muntchi country. One of my niggers, a Jekri, ten days from his village, set up a howl; said his mother had gone *abambo,* gone to the spiritland. He deserted—trekked back to his village. I thought he had had a bad dream, or he was scared of the size of the Muntchi fleshpots—they're cannibals—or he was simply homesick.

"A nigger is homesick the moment he is out of sight of his hut. But when I struck his village about three months later I found that his mother had died. A nigger's love for his mother is probably the best thing about him, and I sort of figure that the strength of this love sets up a sort of—what d'ye call it? Yes, that's it, Captain; a telepathic communication."

* * *

A black brought in a calabash of wild honey. The way they get the honey is curious. They follow the honey birds, which, they say, lead them to the bees' tree. The birds would be stung to death if they attacked the combs, so they lead the blacks, who give the birds a portion of the spoils. It reminds one of the arrangement between the rhinoceros and the birds which feed on insect parasites infesting the rhino's hide. The rhinoceros is short sighted, and thus the birds are welcome to feast on his hide, for their flight gives him warning of approaching danger.

COURT-

THERE was a clatter and rattle as we took our seats and each of us unsnapped his saber from the slings and laid it across the long table around which the court-martial was to sit. Outside in the corridor I had seen the witnesses and the accused, the latter waiting under guard. We were not overly fond of that court-martial chamber and that long table, for we were a permanent court, appointed by Department Headquarters for "the trial of such cases as should be brought before us", and we had been in session many weeks, passing judgment upon a constant procession of glum, or defiant, or frightened, prisoners.

Nor were we altogether to blame for disliking this duty in the Philippines especially, for Department Headquarters had decreed, in its inscrutable wisdom, that all cases should be tried in the heat of the tropic afternoons; and it was a tough job trying to keep awake through the siesta hours.

The starch in my khaki blouse had already softened and I knew that dark spots of perspiration showed where it clung over the shoulders and back. Colonel Willie Brandt, his skinny little figure seeming lost in the great chair at the head of the table, was president of the court by virtue of his being the senior officer present. And we all groaned inwardly, for none of us cared much for close association with Willie in any type of duty. He was altogether too painstaking, too meticulous and too exasperating to have around in the tropical heat. But there he was, sitting very importantly at the head of the table, his nearsighted eyes peering out from above the great drooping pair of cavalry mustaches that were such an arresting and incongruous feature of Willie Brandt's face.

"Regulations require that officers wear side arms while on court-martial duty," he piped up in his dry little voice as

MARTIAL

A Novelette of the U. S. Army

By

MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON

soon as he saw us divesting ourselves of sabers and belts.

No one said a word, but there was an annoyed and irritated note to the rattle and clatter as the sabers were once more hooked to the chain slings and allowed to drag on the floor beside our chairs.

It was a fairly high ranking court, with a colonel, two lieutenant-colonels, four or five majors (of which I was one) and a couple of captains. Molly Saunders was judge advocate, and that was more grief, for Molly never did know what it was all about and always took about three times as long to try a case as the situation warranted. He was fussing about importantly with a sheaf of papers and copies of the charges, his round, red face looking preternaturally solemn, from which I gathered that it must be an unusually important case we were to try today.

"What dirt are you dishing up for us this time?" I asked Molly.

He bent a reproving glance on me.

"A murder case," he answered.

Without any more information than that we all knew pretty well what the case was going to be, for all the Islands knew of the latest murder, wherein a civilian had been blown into the hereafter by the blast from a .45 automatic in the hands of a soldier.

"Some more of this rotgut native hooch, I suppose," grunted Reardon, who sat beside me.

Colonel Willie overheard it and his humorless eyes rested upon us. Old Willie was death on drinks of any sort.

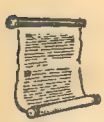
I remember thinking how tough it would be for any soldier who tried to plead intoxication as a mitigating circumstance.

"Is the Judge Advocate ready to present his case?" came Willie's piping voice.

The judge advocate was. With a sigh we settled down as the accused, under guard of two sentinels, came in and took his seat near the foot of the table with Jimmy Britten, his defense counsel, beside him. The court stenographer, in civilian whites, sharpened his pencils and prepared his pad. The judge advocate read the order convening the court and then we stood up and took the oath with another rattle of sabers and waited while the J.A. swore to "well and truly try" the case before him.

The prisoner was asked if he objected to being tried by any member of the court. I saw his eyes rest a moment on Colonel Willie Brandt, but he shook his head. He wasn't a bad looking sort, that prisoner: a well set up, soldierly man with a face bronzed and tanned by years in the military service. His blouse showed the chevrons of a sergeant on the sleeves and he wore a row of service ribbons across his chest.

Colonel Willie Brandt peered at him nearsightedly as the charges were read.



THE mind of the average military legal officer runs to complications and a set of charges is always cluttered up with sub-charges and specifications without end. For instance, this Sergeant William Brady, who was charged with murder, was also charged with carrying a pistol while off duty, with expending Government ammunition, value twenty-nine cents, or something like that, with having been absent from quarters, and several more things of equally earth shaking gravity.

The accused pleaded "Not guilty" to all counts.

The first witnesses called were more or less unimportant. The non-commissioned officer in charge of quarters testified to Sergeant Brady's absence the night in question, the supply sergeant testified to the ammunition being expended, the doctors testified to the victim having been shot through the heart with a .45 caliber bullet, Government issue, and so on. The first important witness was the barkeeper of the Gold Dollar Saloon in Manila.

"What is your name?" asked the J.A. after the witness had sworn to tell "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth".

"Terence Miller, sir."

"Do you know the accused? If so, state who he is."

Miller told.

"What were you doing the night of September fifth, last?"

" I was tendin' bar at the Gold Dollar Saloon, just off the Escolta. There wasn't much of a crowd that night—"

"Just a moment, please. Answer the questions as they are asked you," reproved the J.A. "Did anything out of the ordinary happen that night in the Gold Dollar Saloon?"

"Yes, sir. This feller here, Sergeant Brady, come sashayin' in and stood down at the end of the bar, drinkin' quiet-like. Purty soon he spots this guy, Toribio Sanchez, who's half Spanish and half Tagalog. The two of them stares at each other a minute, then Sanchez passes some remark in Spanish what I don't get, and Sergeant Brady turns kinda white but says nothin'. There don't nothin' happen then for awhile, but bimeby I notices that Sergeant Brady has vamoosed. 'Bout an hour later, near's I can figger, everybody in the bar stops talkin' all to oncet and there in the doorway Sergeant Brady is standin' with a gun in his hand. He's lookin' kinda queer, all pale-like. Before I can make a move, Toribio has turned around, facin' Sergeant Brady. Then Brady cuts loose and lets him have it, firin' four, five times, as I remember.

Toribio slides to the floor and people yell and the police come and Sergeant Brady goes away quiet as a lamb. That's all I know about it, sir."

"Did Toribio Sanchez make any motion to draw a weapon?"

"I dunno as to that, sir."

"No more questions by the judge advocate," announced Saunders. "Cross examination?" He looked at Captain Britten, the defense counsel.

"Yes," said Britten. "How many drinks did Sergeant Brady put away while you were tending bar?"

"Dunno as I remember exact; maybe five or six."

"What was he drinking?"

The judge advocate looked up impatiently.

"I object to the questions of the defense counsel," he said.

"Upon what grounds?" asked the court in Willie Brandt's piping voice.

"As being immaterial and irrelevant to the issue," answered Molly Saunders glibly.

"What has the counsel for the defense to say?" piped Willie again.

"That the question is material to the issue," answered Britten strongly. "The principal charge against the accused is murder. Premeditation is a necessary element of proof in murder."

"The court will be cleared," came Willie's reedy voice; and the accused, the guards, the counsel for the defense and the J.A. and court stenographer filed out.

"All in favor of the objection being sustained say 'Aye'," piped up Willie as soon as the door was closed, and immediately followed his words by saying "Aye!" himself. One other voice echoed him. I forget whose it was.

"Contraries," Willie went on, and a chorus of "No!" came from all the rest of us.

Willie thumped on the table, the accused and the rest of them filed in.

"Objection not sustained," said Willie, acidly. "The witness will answer the question, remembering that he is still under oath," he unnecessarily added.

"What was Sergeant Brady drinking?" repeated the defense counsel.

"Straight whisky, sir," answered the barkeeper promptly.

"Did the accused, Sergeant Brady, appear fully sober and in possession of his right mind at the time of the shooting?" asked the counsel.

"Looked all right to me," returned the barkeeper.

"What's your idea of how a man should look when he is drunk?"

"Well, kinda unable to navigate," returned the barkeeper, "and can't stand on his feet. Yes, sir, I'd say a man was drunk if he fell down and couldn't get up again."

A smile passed around the court; but the prisoner did not smile, nor did Willie Brandt.

"Do you drink much?" asked Britten.

"Us barkeepers don't drink much or we don't hold our jobs," returned the witness virtuously.

"That's all," said the counsel.

"Questions by the court?" asked the J.A.

Willie Brandt looked around at us inquiringly.

I spoke up.

"Yes," I said. "I'd like to ask the witness a question. You say you don't drink much?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you ever had too much to drink?"

"Well, sir, I might have had," admitted the barkeeper. "In my younger days," he qualified.

"Did you ever, in one of those periods, draw a blank?"

"Yes, sir, once or twice," admitted the barkeeper cautiously.

I saw several members of the court grin as I asked the question, but Willie Brandt did not smile. He looked faintly puzzled. Sergeant Brady, the accused, stared at me for a second but his eyes were unfathomable.

"I think it would clear the situation if the witness would explain what he

means by drawing a blank," interposed Willie Brandt.

The barkeeper scratched his head.

"Well, sir—" he hemmed a little—"mebbe I can kinda show what I mean. Oncet when I was much younger, I went on a bender. I got myself all sloshed up, lappin' up whisky and beer and brandy, mixed with some champagne. Last thing I knowed I was sittin' in the back room of a bar in New York and the next thing I knowed I wakes up in the back room of a bar in Chicago, a bar where I used to hang out before I comes to New York. Nobody was with me. I must 'a' gone to the station, bought my ticket and come all that way not knowin' what I was doin'."

I heard Willie Brandt sniff. The judge advocate began to get impatient. The other members of the court looked curious and a little puzzled. Only the prisoner seemed to know what it was all about and he leaned forward, looking keenly interested.

THE witness was excused. Others followed who repeated the gist of what the barkeeper had testified as to the actual event of the shooting. At last the judge advocate rested his case. Certainly it looked like a watertight affair. The guilt of the accused was evident to any one without the shadow of a reasonable doubt.

The first witness called by the defense was another barkeeper, a man who worked at Frisco Harry's, another saloon on the Escolta. The counsel for the defense asked him if he had seen the accused the night in question.

He had.

Had he seen the accused drinking much?

Yes, Sergeant Brady had lapped up six or seven whiskies at his place before the shooting.

Did Sergeant Brady seem to be intoxicated?

The barkeeper wasn't quite sure. He thought that the sergeant seemed able to navigate all right, but there was a queer look in his eye.

There were no questions by the judge advocate. I asked this bartender the same question I had the other one—had he ever drawn a blank?

Yes, he had on one or two occasions when he was younger and wilder.

What had he done in this condition?

He didn't know, but he woke up in the police station the next morning pretty well battered up and accused of having picked a fight with his brother-in-law and having beaten up several cops. It was all news to him.

The witness was excused. The judge advocate asked if the accused wished to take the stand in his own defense. The accused did.

The president of the court carefully explained his rights as a witness for himself. The accused admitted that he understood these rights. Being duly sworn, he took the witness chair, gave his name, rank and organization and admitted that he was the accused in this case, all according to form.

Then his own counsel asked him to tell the story of what occurred.

The sergeant cleared his throat and commenced to speak, but in so low a voice that the court stenographer asked him to speak more loudly. He raised his voice at this.

"As I was sayin'," he went on, "I was feelin' sort of low that night and I went down to have a drink or two. I had several drinks at Frisco Harry's and then rambled over to the Gold Dollar Saloon. There I was standin' up to the bar when this fellow Toribio Sanchez appeared in view. He sounded off with somethin' pretty rotten in Spanish and I got sore. I didn't say nothin' in return, just tried to forget it. Bimeby I went out and went back to Frisco Harry's. Then I started back to barracks but on the way I stopped in at a native *cantina*. I took a drink or two of native hooch—not many I don't think, and that's the last thing that I remember. The next thing I knowed I woke up

in the guardhouse with an awful head and found myself accused of murder . . . That's all I know about it."

The sergeant looked around at the faces of all of us on that court-martial in a hopeless sort of fashion, as though not expecting any one to believe him.

The defense counsel turned him over for cross-examination to the judge advocate.

"What was it that the halfbreed, Toribio Sanchez, said to you in the bar?"

The sergeant was a long time in thinking over this question. Finally he raised his head.

"I'd rather not answer that question, sir," he stated quietly.

The judge advocate started to grow unpleasant about it, then he must have realized that the question could very easily be objected to as being a leading question and one tending to be self-incriminatory, so he changed his tune.

"How many drinks are you in the habit of taking, say, in the course of a week?" he asked.

"Sometimes none, sometimes very few and again I might take a lot; it all depends," returned the sergeant, level voiced.

"Would you call yourself a man who could ordinarily hold his liquor well?" pressed the J.A.

"I would," returned the sergeant.

"No further question by the judge advocate," announced Saunders. "Any questions by the court?"

Colonel Willie Brandt nodded.

"Sergeant," he began, peering forward in his nearsighted way, his voice appearing even weaker and reedier than usual, "do I understand you to say that you knew nothing after taking the drinks of native liquor?"

"Yes, Colonel," returned Sergeant Brady.

"You have heard the witnesses state that you afterward came out to Fort McKinley, went to your squadroom, removed a lock from the pistol rack, took out your pistol and returned to Manila?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you still say that you knew nothing of all these things you did?"

"Yes, Colonel. I knew nothing about it until I was told the next day."

"That's all I wish to ask," stated Willie with another pronounced sniff of disbelief.

There were no other questions asked. The witness was excused and resumed his place in the seat of the accused. The judge advocate summed up the case in brief form. The counsel for the defense followed, making a plea for the man's previous good record and playing up the lack of premeditation, evinced by the testimony as to the sergeant's numerous drinks.

The case was finished. There was nothing to do but clear the court.

As quickly as the doors were closed we started to relax and light up cigars and cigarets. But Willie Brandt quickly stopped this.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I don't think that smoking tobacco in any form is compatible with the seriousness of the issue we are asked to decide."

Cursing inwardly we put out our cigarets and cigars and tried to make the best of a bad situation.

"Does any one wish to say anything before we start voting on the innocence or guilt of the accused?" asked Willie. "Personally I think it is a plain case of deliberate murder."

"It all depends upon what you call deliberate," I replied, and noted that there were several supporting nods.

"What do you mean, Major Armstrong?" he answered in his weak treble.

"I mean just this, Colonel: That the man might very well have committed the crime and been totally unaware of what he did."

"Impossible, Major," he announced. "Why, he went all the way out to Fort McKinley, probably took a *calesa* and gave the directions to the driver. Once there, he found his way to his own barracks. When he arrived in his own squadroom he removed the lock from the pistol rack and took *his own pistol!*

And you know one Government pistol is like another with the exception of a numeral that would be impossible for a truly drunken man to read. This done, he broke into the supply sergeant's store of ammunition and took out some cartridges and then went down to Manila and shot the *mestizo* fellow."

"I'm ready to vote now," announced one of the lieutenant-colonels, and others nodded in agreement.

"I know," I admitted, "that it sounds far fetched but I also know that stranger things than this have happened when a man carries a load of mixed drinks—or even too much of one drink."

"You speak from personal experience perhaps, Major?" asked Willie Brandt unpleasantly.

"Yes and no," I admitted. "I have had one or two experiences of my own, but the queerest experience of all was a case that I know of which involved another officer. The strange thing about it was that this other officer probably had never taken a drink before in his life. Perhaps if you gentlemen will have patience enough to listen to me, the story might cast some light on the case before us. May I have your permission to tell it, Colonel?"

"If it has any bearing on this case I see no objection," returned Willie Brandt, folding his hands primly on the table in front of him.

II

WELL, [I started my story], these things happened while I was a lieutenant out here in the Islands back in 1910 some time. I was stationed with different troops at different periods, but this one troop remained in my memory. Call it M Troop of the Second Cavalry, which it wasn't. And call my captain Captain Peady, which wasn't his name. There was a sergeant in the story as well whom I'll call Sergeant Fish, which was not the sergeant's name either. At any rate we were down in the southern Islands at Jolo.

There's a girl in the story too, and a halfcaste man.

First, the girl: she was a Spanish *mestizo,* a flower-like creature if ever there was one, but a heavy petaled, Oriental sort of flower. Her beauty was almost cruel. There was a lure about her and an intoxicating loveliness that did strange things to men's hearts, whatever the color of their skins. She was one of those women who are neither large nor small but give, nevertheless, the impression of stateliness. I have to enlarge upon her, for it was her beauty that started the trouble.

My captain, Peady, was not the sort of man who was either attracted to or by women. Neither tobacco, wine, women nor song had figured in his life. As a man, he had no redeeming vices. As a soldier, he was a martinet lacking the human touch entirely, with Regulations first and foremost all the time.

The first time he saw her was a night or two after our arrival, when Señor Rubio, the polite and affable old Spanish merchant, her father, invited us to his house for a cup of coffee.

She came into the rather plain room with its bamboo rafters and its *nipa* thatched roof. And I tell you, gentlemen, in that drab room she glowed like a flame colored flower.

I myself was fairly safe having been engaged for some time to a girl I had known since boyhood. But Captain Peady stammered and stuttered and dropped his coffee cup and generally acted like a schoolboy with his first love. There was no doubt about it. He was hit and hard hit and, as often happens in cases with men of his type, his reactions were clumsy and ludicrous.

Our visit was short that first time, but the captain kept plaguing me to go with him again and again until I grew fed up on trying to sit through his love making and keep a straight face for a whole evening.

And then he began to rave about her in the orderly room, which was even worse for I had to say "Yes, sir," and

"No, sir," as a good lieutenant should.

There was another visitor at her father's house whose presence irked the captain considerably. And that was this halfcaste to whom I referred. He was a handsome sort of brute at that, but with sleek and well oiled hair and a vile habit of wearing pale pink silk shirts and execrable perfume. Evidently he was a welcome guest at the Rubio's, this fellow Ramires—which is not his name but it does not matter. Anyway, Ramires owned a small ship of his own in which he cruised about the Islands buying up pearls. And from all accounts, he made a good thing out of it.

It must have been at least a week or two after we arrived that Sergeant Fish came into the picture. Fish was a fine upstanding young fellow, as straight as a lance and extremely good looking in a strong fashion of his own.

A discreet and veiled question from Consuelo, the girl in the case, led me to the belief that she had not been indifferent to the charms of the sergeant. And this belief was strengthened when I was inspecting guard two or three nights afterward and ran across Sergeant Fish and Consuelo strolling along together near the sea wall, their heads bent in serious conversation. Evidently Consuelo found the sergeant's company a good deal more interesting than the captain's, for I knew that Captain Peady had never talked to the girl outside her father's house—even if he'd had the nerve to ask her out, which I doubted. You know how those Spanish people are. They keep their daughters under lock and key. That Sergeant Fish was able to steal her away even for a few minutes from under the watchful eye of her father, argued pretty well for Sergeant Fish's standing with the girl.

There was another person who knew of the sergeant's progress, and that was this Ramires fellow. And I gathered from various signs that he and the girl had had a falling out, for he looked pretty ugly when he was in her vicinity and the girl tossed her head defiantly whenever he spoke to her.

This little drama brewing under our noses was, after all, incidental to our main business in that neighborhood, which was to "pacify" the Moros and teach them respect for Uncle Sam's mailed fist.

One of the chief thorns in our side was an old Moro chieftain named Datto Subinga. He had a stronghold a half day's sail by sea along the coast and three or four hours' march by land. It was his young warriors who provided most of the excitement in the *juramentado* line, for they had a devilish habit of running amok in the vicinity of our troops and slashing down a few good American soldiers each time. Datto Subinga varied this pleasant pastime by sending out bands of them to waylay our patrols and our stragglers. At least we were certain that they were Datto Subinga's men, but we could never be sure for he was a plausible old liar and strong on martyred innocence whenever we tried to pin anything on him.

He was also a business man on the side, was the old datto, sending out his *praus* manned with his slaves and feudal underlings to gather in pearls, which he traded to Ramires after much shrewd bargaining.

I knew that Ramires was in contact with him very often and that his small ship stopped at Datto Subinga's bamboo wharves more often than not. I also developed a suspicion that a whole lot of the datto's information concerning the movement of American troops came through Ramires.

AND then one day came the report that ten of our men on a mapping detail had been cut down by an unknown force of Moros about halfway between Jolo and Datto Subinga's bailiwick. Now these men had just started on their expedition about two hours before Ramires' vessel had sailed out of Jolo.

I made up my mind to grab Ramires

when he returned and find out the whys and wherefores. I was waiting for him with a couple of husky troopers the following day when he landed. One of these husky aides was Sergeant Fish.

"Come on, Ramires," I said to him when he stepped ashore. "I want to hold a little *habla* with you."

He looked startled enough but he came on all the same, smelling to high heaven of cheap perfume as we led him to the orderly room.

"Sit down, Ramires," I invited him. "Here's what I want to see you about. I'm very much interested in finding out how Datto Subinga gets such quick information about the movement of our troops. Do you know anything about it?" And I glared at him pretty severely.

"But no, señor; but no." He flung his hands wide. "I know nothing, absolutely nothing. It is that Datto Subinga is one of my best customers and I go to him often to trade for pearls."

"Yes," I replied coldly. "And just what was your business with Datto Subinga yesterday?"

"I will tell you, señor," he said with engaging frankness. "The old datto has the most beautiful string of pearls in the whole of the southern Islands."

"String of pearls?" I repeated suspiciously, to draw him out.

"Yes, string of pearls," he replied. "They have come from China or somewhere in the East, and they are beautiful. Ninety of them, señor, flawless and of perfect color and shape! Long I have tried to buy them for they are a fortune and a man could live in Paris the rest of his days on the profit to be made from those pearls."

As he spoke I could see the whole scene in my mind's eye, for I had also been a visitor at the old datto's.

I can recall that old Moro now: a lean, wizened wisp of a man in a gayly colored velvet jacket and skin tight trousers, his old face seamed and wrinkled with the passage of the years, his skin a yellow ocher, his mouth a scarlet unpleasantness from the stain of the betel nuts, squatting there on the dirty matting, one hand on the ivory and gold handle of his *kris*, the other fondling that string of pearls.

They were beautiful pearls, as I well knew, for I had seen them, and I could imagine Ramires' eyes glittering as he viewed their perfection—a string of pearls fit for a queen's ransom. And I suppose they would appeal to Ramires much more deeply than they did to me, for he would see their uniform matching and their superb color and symmetry.

So I was more or less ready to believe Ramires when he told me about the pearls, and my suspicions of him abated somewhat. As a matter of fact I would have saved a lot of trouble for everybody concerned if I had thrown him over the sea wall then and there.

Captain Peady was still mooning around, raving about Consuelo. I am sure he had no suspicion that Sergeant Fish had beaten his time. Every one else in Jolo knew it, however. Consuelo had a good deal of independence, for she was able to get out from under the paternal rooftree more often than any Spanish girl I have ever known. As a matter of fact her mother was dead and she had her father pretty well buffaloed.

Pretty soon Sergeant Fish began to be invited to the house, although not on the same evenings that Captain Peady was among those present. Ramires still kept up his visits, partially because he was in business with her father, buying goods from him to trade with the Moros. What he thought of Sergeant Fish's interference no one but Ramires knew, and Ramires was about as communicative as a shark.

III

THE officers around that court-martial table were listening with deep interest as I paused for breath. Only Colonel Willie Brandt was fidgeting, glancing now and then

at his watch. He broke the silence with his dry, reedy little voice.

"Yes, yes, Major," he said querulously, "but most of us here have served in the southern Islands at one time or another and are familiar with conditions there. Moreover, we are engaged in the trial of a serious case and I have yet to see what bearing your story has upon the matter before us."

"If you will be patient just a little longer, Colonel," I returned, "I think that this story will prove itself a very apt illustration of what the counsel for the defense is trying to prove in this case. May I have the permission of the court to continue?" I asked the group at large.

"Yes, yes, go on," murmured several voices, and I plunged anew into my story:

As I have said [I continued], this drama of the captain, the sergeant, the halfcaste and the girl went along smoothly enough until about the end of the fourth week we were in Jolo.

And then one day Consuelo disappeared.

The first news I had of it was from Sergeant Fish. He came to me when I was alone in the orderly room early one morning.

"Lieutenant," he said, "I'd like to have a five-day pass."

"Where to and for what?" I asked in amazement, because there was no place to go outside of Jolo unless one wished to run the risk of being set upon by *juramentados*.

"Lieutenant, I just gotta have a five-day pass," he repeated doggedly, and I could see that the man was laboring under a heavy strain.

"Tell me what it's all about, Sergeant."

His voice was husky.

"It's my girl, sir. She disappeared last night!"

At first I didn't believe him.

"Consuelo disappeared?" I gasped.

"Yes, sir, and yesterday she promised to marry me."

"Where in blazes could she have gone?" I asked.

The sergeant shook his head.

"I dunno, sir. Looks to me like some dirty work somewhere. She wouldn't have gone away of her own free will."

"You're sure of that?" I asked.

"As sure as God made little apples, Lieutenant. Her and me had fixed it all up to get married as soon as I got discharged, and I was goin' into business with her old man."

This information was not surprising to me, for I had seen the way matters were shaping up. At the same time I was doing some rapid thinking.

"Well, if you're sure she wouldn't have gone away of her own free will, then she must have been abducted."

"Who's abducted?" came the captain's voice from the doorway. I stood up as he entered.

"Old Rubio's daughter, sir, Señorita Consuelo."

The captain's face turned white.

"What's that you say? What's that? What's that?"

I told him of the news I had just heard. The captain scarcely listened to my last few words, but went charging straightway out of the orderly room, heading toward Rubio's house, leaving the sergeant and me to face the problem alone.

"I don't blame you, Sergeant, for wanting to go on a search for her, but you haven't any clues as to where to start."

"Not much, sir," he said. "Only—Ramires' boat is gone. It sailed last night about midnight."

"The hell you say!"

"Yes, sir, and he's about crooked enough to pull a stunt like this." The sergeant looked pretty murderous, for which I couldn't blame him much.

"So," I said, "Ramires is gone with his boat. Where do you suppose he's gone?"

"Well, sir, the place he goes most often is Datto Subinga's . . ."

Datto Subinga! A picture of the old

fellow appeared in my mind as I had last see him, showing me that string of pearls he treasured so mightily. The sergeant went on talking, but I scarcely listened to him, for a dim idea was taking shape in my brain, an idea that had to do with those pearls. Then Sergeant Fish's voice fell on my consciousness again.

". . . Why, sir, that Ramires fellow would sell his own mother for a plugged peso."

With those words suddenly a solution of the mystery leaped into my mind. Ramires had traded the girl for the pearls!

Certainly Ramires yearned for those pearls, but I could imagine the light fading from his face when the old datto, peering at him obliquely with smoke reddened eyes, had first stated his terms of barter.

There probably had been much argument, polite and suave, but I could imagine the yellowed old man as inflexible as the steel of his *kris,* refusing to sell his treasure for any sum of money but hinting that he would sell for his own price.

And it was probably that price that had started a series of events which might lead to tragedy.

It was probably with much sly Malay imagery, much flowery symbolism, that Datto Subinga had brought out the fact that his harem was going to seed, that he was tired of his women, that his old frame needed reviving with the warmth of youth and beauty. And for youth and beauty only would he trade his pearls.

So far that would probably be simple enough, but what complicated the affair undoubtedly was that Datto Subinga desired that youth and beauty personified in Consuelo. I remembered that she and her father had accompanied Ramires on one of his trading trips and called upon the datto.

As the story afterward came out, my surmise had been correct.

Later on I heard that Ramires had sent a servant to Consuelo purporting to bring a message from Sergeant Fish, asking her to meet him at their usual trysting place on the sea wall.

I imagine that she kept this tryst only to be seized and hurried on board Ramires' vessel. It came out later that she was drugged.

Later I learned that it was not Datto Subinga who welcomed them, but his nephew, a muscular young Moro in a crimson jacket gleaming with silver buttons and carrying a silver handled *kris* in his belt.

What happened next morning no one seemed to know. But evidently yellow old Datto Subinga, followed by his nephew, must have entered the cabin; and I could imagine Consuelo frightened and bewildered as she saw them. Probably the pearls were paid over immediately by the old datto and it was undoubtedly at this time that the tragedy happened.

It would have been just like the young nephew to cut down the old datto at this moment. Evidently Ramires received the pearls then, probably lifted them from a pool of blood. This is about the way the thing happened, although of course it did not come out until afterward . . .

FOR the moment Sergeant Fish and I faced each other across the desk.

"No!" I shook my head in decided fashion—"I'm afraid I can't give you a five-day pass, Sergeant. In the first place it would be equivalent to giving you a sentence of death, for you'd head straight for Datto Subinga's. You'd probably be killed before you ever got there, and you certainly would be killed if you managed to arrive. You stick around, Sergeant, and be as patient as you can while I try to find out for certain where the girl is. If we can locate her at Datto Subinga's I think I can get one of the Navy officers to take us up there in a gunboat. One man couldn't hope to get in there alive go-

ing by land, and headquarters certainly wouldn't let us take the troop out."

Sergeant Fish saluted, his face a wooden mask, and strode out of the place. I was almost certain in my own mind that he intended taking measures of his own but there was no way of preventing him for the moment, short of putting him in the guardhouse, which I had no right to do.

I decided to secure what information I could and trailed up toward Rubio's house. I found the old Spaniard, Consuelo's father, pacing the floor like a wild man while Captain Peady sat in one of those big, fan-shaped Bilibid chairs, huddled up and shaking.

Rubio waved his arms and shouted when I came in, and I had to wait until he calmed down until I could find out what he knew. He knew even less than I did. It was then that I told him my theory, and he went off in another fit, but at the same time I am sure he didn't altogether believe that Ramires would play him such an evil trick.

"And you think that Consuelo has been abducted and sold to Datto Subinga?" came Captain Peady's voice from the chair.

"Yes, Captain, that's the only theory that seems to fit the case."

Then as I looked at him I noticed the unnatural brightness of his eyes, the spots of color in his cheeks and the trembling of his hands.

"It looks as though you need a good stiff drink, Captain," I said, "and some quinine."

"Never had a drink in my life," he announced, but Rubio, remembering his Spanish hospitality in spite of his grief, had already clapped his hands for a *muchacho*. The boy brought in a bottle of champagne, of all things.

Champagne is a great drink with the Spanish, but it isn't particularly good medicine for a cold to my way of thinking.

The captain looked at the bottle in a sort of pathetic terror as Rubio opened it and poured out the sparkling stuff.

"No, no," he protested as Rubio shoved the tall stemmed glass at him.

"But yes, señor, but yes!" insisted Rubio. "This will make you strong and you must be strong to help me find my daughter!"

I think it was this argument that induced Captain Peady to take his first drink, for take it he did, tasting it suspiciously at first and then coughing a little as the bubbles tickled his throat. Thereafter he drank it down as one would soda-water.

We sat there, we three, discussing the thing and the best means of locating Consuelo. We emptied one bottle and another, and the captain and Rubio were on their fourth bottle when I left to go about my duties. I can't stand much champagne without feeling swelled up like a poisoned pup, but I never thought of it as a very serious drink.

I set on foot such inquiries as I could throughout the day, but failed to get any information. I had the harbor watched and ordered that report be made to me the moment that Ramires returned. In the meantime I tried to find Sergeant Fish. It did not take very long to realize that he had flown the coop as I was afraid he would do. This made me feel pretty rotten, I can tell you, for I was sure that the man was going to certain death and, with all due regard to Consuelo's surpassing loveliness, I didn't believe that half a dozen Consuelos were worth one good American sergeant of the type of Sergeant Fish.

Later in the afternoon I went over to Rubio's again to see if there were any news. There was no news of Consuelo, but it was plain to be seen that old Rubio and Captain Peady were pretty far along in their cups. There were empty champagne bottles all about and on the table stood liqueur, whisky and cognac bottles, all of which showed signs of having been generously sampled. I remember thinking to myself that any incipient fever, foolish enough to attempt

to make headway against that flow of alcohol, was doomed to failure before it started. But knowing the captain's abstemious habits, I couldn't help reflecting that he was due to pass out pretty soon at the rate he was putting that potent stuff away.

I left them over their bottles and glasses and went to my supper. There was still no word concerning Consuelo. Thereafter I went to my quarters and tried to catch up on my reading of a bunch of months' old home papers.

It must have been about eleven o'clock that night that an orderly roused me out.

"Captain's compliments," he stated, "and the Lieutenant will prepare to march immediately with the troop. I've got the Lieutenant's horse all saddled and ready outside."

IV

AGAIN I paused for breath and looked about at my audience, that group of officers around the court-martial table. For the most part they were leaning forward, looking intensely interested. Willie Brandt was the only one who chose to interrupt at this point.

"Major," he asked in that bleating voice of his, "are we to understand that this story is an actual recital of events as they happened?"

"I beg your pardon, Colonel!" I returned somewhat angrily.

Willie Brandt looked a little flustered, seeing that he had committed an error, and hastened to explain himself—

"I just wanted to know if it was a hypothetical case you are using as an illustration, or whether it was an actual occurrence."

"It was a series of actual occurrences, Colonel," I stated flatly, and went on with my story:

I stared at the orderly for a few seconds, thinking this was a blame queer time of night for such an order.

While I was slipping on revolver belt and holster I asked the messenger what it was all about.

"Dunno, sir," he said. "Captain said somethin' about secret orders."

This was nothing unusual during those days in the southern Islands and the matter seemed more logical. I wondered, however, how the captain was standing his liquor; but I figured out that he had probably sobered up on receipt of his orders from headquarters.

At any rate, I was soon mounted and trotting down toward the troop, my canteen strapped tight over my saddle bags and poncho and blankets rolled across the cantle. As I trotted up to the troop I found that it was already moving out in the darkness. Riding forward, I soon located the captain up ahead of the guidon, saluted and reported to him.

"Very good, Mr. Armstrong," he said. "Pass the word back that the men are to keep silent."

While I was doing this we arrived at the gate where the guards on duty quickly opened up for us at the captain's command.

It was too dark to see very much, but I could sense the troop moving smoothly behind us. Wondering what it was all about, I waited until we were outside the walls and thudding along the road in the velvety blackness before I asked the captain. He was nothing but a dim and shadowy figure, half seen through the darkness. For a moment he made no reply, and then he suddenly turned to me.

"Get back in rear and see that the troop remains closed up in column; also put out a rear guard."

I turned about at the word and drew in my horse to wait for the troop to pass. As the first two sets of fours went by me, I heard the captain giving orders for the putting out of an advance guard.

Riding back in rear, I had plenty of time to think. Naturally I was very curious as to our destination and mission. We were following a broad trail

that bore to the left, but this gave me no clue for this trail might have taken us to any number of places.

It must have been about midnight when the moon came from behind the clouds and lighted up the country, bathing *cogon* grass and bamboo in a silvery radiance.

But moonlight has the unfortunate peculiarity of being extremely deceptive stuff. Time and again I was certain that I saw human figures flitting through the trees and keeping pace with our march. Once or twice, so strong was the illusion, that I dropped my hand to my revolver butt and stiffened in the saddle, ready to bark out a warning to my men.

It was about this time that word came rippling down the column—

"Captain's compliments, and the Lootenant will please join him!"

Putting Starlight to a trot, I soon reached the head of the column. The little mare wanted to break into a gallop, so eager was she to get back to what she considered her rightful position. As I drew up alongside the captain I glanced at him curiously, but he did not deign to look at me. It seemed to me that it was the better part of wisdom to tell a second in command what it was all about. I was a little sore at his silence, but made up my mind not to say a word until he volunteered some information.

But I did not neglect for a second to keep a sharp eye out to front and flanks. That infernal moonlight was playing strange tricks with my eyes, for I was almost certain now that furtive black shadows were slipping along beside our route.

The troop had been at a walk for nearly thirty minutes, and it was time for a halt to readjust equipment.

Almost on the second, the captain threw up his hand and signaled the command to halt and dismount. I turned my horse over to my orderly and strolled back to the column to see that all was well, noting that the captain had chosen a good halting place just behind the crest of a hill which sloped down to a narrow valley that lay in front of us.

A cheerful buzz of conversation rose from the men, for they were excited and curious as to their mission, and I heard many whispered speculations and answered many questions as my eye roamed over bits and bridles, saddle blankets and girths. Halfway down the column one of the men struck a match and held it in his cupped hands, but I leaped at him and blew it out, sending the whispered word up and down the line that there would be no smoking. It is remarkable how far the lighted end of a cigaret can be seen at night; and what is even more remarkable is the extraordinary distance that one can detect the smell of tobacco smoke in the night air.

THE allotted five minutes' halt found me back at the head of the column, still saying nothing to the captain and being the recipient of a complete and total silence myself. I rather wondered at this, for the captain was a talkative soul when on the march and it was unusual for him to maintain such a complete silence for so long a time.

I didn't like the looks of that narrow valley before us, although I could no longer see signs of those furtive, slinking figures that had so obsessed my imagination a few minutes previously. I rather hoped that the captain would send a patrol through that valley before thrusting a whole troop in there, for it was a nasty place for an ambush, with no room for us to spread out and defend ourselves.

The thought had scarcely passed through my mind when the captain turned to me.

"Take four men and gallop through that valley, Lieutenant."

He spoke in a queer, strained voice and, as I saw his eyes in the moonlight, I noted that they seemed exceedingly

blank. It was as though he were looking through and beyond me.

There was little time to remark upon this however, for I had immediately to move out with the first set of fours. Stringing them out behind me, I drew my revolver and set out at a gallop down through the valley, scanning its high steep walls to right and left. Nothing showed on the flanks so far as I could see, but I noted that ahead of me the jungle ran down close to the trail and that we were faced with a small, tunnel-like entrance through the heavy growth of trees. No moonlight filtered through those leaves and branches and the trail lost itself in impenetrable blackness at this point.

I must own that it was with considerable trepidation that I rode at that tunnel-like opening. And then, when I was still distant about thirty yards, I thought of an old scouting trick.

Suddenly I drew my horse up on his haunches, signaling my men to halt behind me. Then, peering dramatically into the darkness, I gave a warning signal and whirled my horse about. My men followed my example and we leaned low on our horses' necks and galloped back whence we had come.

It is a trick that few ambushed enemies can resist, and the Moros were no exception to the rule.

We had not covered five yards before I heard the crack of a rifle, followed by two or three more. Then there came a high pitched yell and, looking back, I saw the moonlight suddenly gleam on spear tips and steel *barongs* and *krises*.

The captain sat his horse stolidy as I rode up and made my report.

The Moros whom we had roused up, deceived by our sudden flight, were emboldened to move out across the valley and they came on in an irregular mass of some fifty or sixty men, yelling like mad and clashing spears against shields. The captain stared at them gravely and then, turning about in his saddle, called out—

"Fight on foot, action front!"

His voice still had that queer strained note in it, but there was nothing of excitement in his tone. It was as though he were a man moving in a dream. Turning to the guidon sergeant, who was busily marshaling the led horses, he told him not to go more than fifty yards in rear of the troop.

But now the eager troopers were swarming up from the column in rear, their rifles at the carry. The Moros were about halfway up the valley and still coming on. There was no necessity for giving commands. Men flung themselves on their stomachs in an irregular line across the hillcrest and began to load and fire without orders. In the space of a few seconds that hillcrest was belching a sizable amount of bullets at Mr. Moro.

But you have to give the Moro credit. When he starts an attack he likes to go through with it. In spite of the fact that they were being spilled all over the landscape, the survivors continued to come on, yelling bloody murder. It was tricky shooting in the moonlight but it was beautiful "battle sight" range.

As the men steadied down to their firing our bullets began to smack and thud into Moro bodies, thinning out their compact mass. All was going well on our front but a soldier instinctively thinks of his flanks and rear and I was afraid that hell might start popping from behind us. The same instinct that caused me concern evidently awoke the captain to action, for he turned to me and ordered me to take out a platoon from the firing line and double back to the led horses. I must say I had never thought much of Captain Peady as a soldier before this; frankly I had had very little confidence in him; but he certainly seemed to be on the job this night.

I collected my platoon, mainly by hauling individuals out by the slack of their pants, so intent were they on the attack at the front. Just as we started back at a dog trot for the rear, I saw the surviving Moros, some fifteen or eighteen men, still coming on, although

they were receiving terrific punishment.

We had scarcely gone twenty-five yards down the trail, when I heard a high pitched yell and a revolver shot from the direction of the led horses.

You know how unreal things appear in a fight. Complicate the ordinary fight by the trickiness of moonlight and you can get an idea of what I am trying to describe.

The first thing I knew, the trail seemed blocked with dark figures who leaped and grunted and yelled.

MY GUN was spitting into the midst of them and my men had swarmed up on either side and were firing from the hip, cramming fresh clips into their rifles and cutting loose as rapidly as they could squeeze the triggers.

In spite of it, those Moros were among us in a trice and I was standing there with an empty revolver, wondering in a calm and incurious sort of way how long it would be before one of those razor-sharp *barongs* sliced me into pieces. The soldier at my right went down with a spear through his shoulder and I had sense enough to pick up his rifle. There was no time to load and fire and I swung it by the muzzle, cracking down at every head I could see. You know the Moros aren't very tall and I had the advantage of height. I sailed in hammer and tongs. The memory of that hectic five minutes is considerably blurred, but all of a sudden I felt a surge of men behind me and there was Captain Peady with the rest of the troop, firing in cool and steady manner into the press of Moros.

Suddenly the fight was over, with no sign of the enemy and little sound of him except the occasional crashing as he fled among the trees.

Captain Peady stood there braced, with legs wide apart, and looked about him at the dead and dying Moros, of which there were a good dozen or more spread at our feet.

Three of our men were wounded and Corporal Johnson was killed, a *barong* having severed his head nearly from his body. The wounded were quickly looked after, none of them being dangerously cut, and the led horses were brought out.

The best we could do was to tie poor Johnson's body across the saddle he had been sitting in so short a time before, and I remember we had the dickens of a time holding his horse while we strapped the body in place.

Throughout all this the captain said nothing, but I noticed that he had sent out march outposts.

As we were adjusting the last strap around Johnson's body he came over to me.

"Hurry this up," he said in that strange voice. "I want to get to Datto Subinga's before daylight."

Datto Subinga's! So that was where we were heading! At first I took the news fairly calmly, not seeing much amiss about it. Then as the led horses were brought up and men began to scramble into the saddles, a slow doubt began to creep over me. Why should the troop have been ordered out to go to Datto Subinga's this night of all nights? Of course there was that mapping detail that had been killed off a few days before. Suddenly it came over me that they must have been killed somewhere near this very spot and I rejoiced that we had punished their murderers.

As we rode forward once more down the hill to the valley with a patrol out in front to secure us against further attacks, I formulated a question in my mind and finally broached it to the captain.

"How did you talk headquarters into letting us go out and rescue Señorita Consuelo Rubio?" I asked, studying the captain's face in the moonlight.

He didn't answer me for a space and I repeated the question in a slightly louder tone. Then he turned that peculiar vacant stare upon me.

"Yes," he said, "to rescue Consuelo."

And then, as though suddenly aroused to the need for making up lost time, he swung around in his saddle and gave the command, "Trot! March!"

The tempo of the horses' hoofs immediately accelerated into a swifter movement. Behind us the creak of saddle leather and the rise and fall of men's bodies in the saddle, the clink and jingle of spurs and bits and thump of gunboots swelled up into the music that marks cavalry at the trot. We flowed over that hill and down through the valley. Ahead of us the patrol disappeared into the dark, tunnel-like opening, one man remaining at the entrance while the others rode through. The man at the entrance signaled to us "all clear," and we came on at a steady trot in column of twos, and entered into the darkness of that narrow place.

The captain had given no very definite answer to my question and I wondered if he had actually prevailed upon headquarters to allow him to take the troop forth or whether he had simply gone out on his own responsibility. In the latter event he certainly was due for a quick and brisk appearance before a court-martial when he returned to Jolo. All the same, I was glad to be out on this expedition—not for Consuelo's sake so much, but because I was worried about Sergeant Fish, who, I was certain, had headed forth alone with the same object in view. I wondered what had become of him and if he had succeeded in getting through this pack of Moros we had just routed.

In the packed darkness of the forest trail the creak and thump and thud of the troop swelled in volume so that one could scarcely hear anything else. We were quickly through the belt of jungle and out on the other side, where the valley began to widen out. From here we were still an hour's march from Datto Subinga's stronghold, but I was glad to see that the captain was keeping up the trot, for I hoped we could get through before the survivors of the fight carried back word of our coming.

What we were going to do after we got there I did not know, for the old datto's village was protected by a *cotta* whose coral walls were some eight feet high; and I knew the old villain had plenty of fighting men to help defend them.

At this time I did not know that the datto had been killed and that his nephew had assumed command. Had I known it, it would have made little difference anyway. What I did not want to see was the loss of any more lives of our men. And I knew that coral walled *cotta* would be a hard position to capture. But the captain didn't seem to be worried. He rode on beside me, staring straight to the front and saying nothing.

I MUST confess it got a little uncanny riding beside this silent man. The moonlight plays queer tricks on one's imagination and once I even found myself wondering if he were really alive, so unreal did he seem and so totally different from the rather prosaic and conventional officer that I had known heretofore.

We were now riding down the middle of this broader valley when, glancing ahead, I saw that the point of the advance guard had halted.

"I'll gallop ahead and see what's the matter, Captain," I said. And, without waiting word from him, I tightened legs and loosened reins on my mare, and she swung into a gallop.

We drew rapidly up on the advance guard, and found them conferring together in animated tones. They opened out as the mare eased down to a walk. For the first time I saw the tall, well built frame of Sergeant Fish, sitting easily in his saddle.

"Where the devil did you come from, Sergeant?" I asked, and the relief I felt must have shown in my voice for he answered me in a rather friendly and pleased fashion.

"Well, Lieutenant, I sort of moseyed out to see if I couldn't locate my girl . . ."

"But how the hell did you get through that gang of Moros?"

"I heard 'em comin', Lieutenant, and I hid out in the hills until they passed. Then as I was makin' my way back to the route again I heard the shootin' and came on back, thinkin' it might be the troop followin' up. Where are you bound for, Lieutenant?" he asked hopefully.

"Same place you are," I returned, and my reply was short, as I had no desire to give any explanations. "You stick along here with the advance guard now and don't try any more lone scout stuff. Do you understand, Sergeant?"

"Yes, sir, I understand," he replied, and I could see he was relieved and pleased at having the troop back him up.

Signaling back to the outfit behind me, I waited there on the side of the trail until they caught up, while the advance guard went on ahead. The captain came trotting up in front of the guidon. But I might as well have been thin air for all the attention he paid me as he rode silently, staring straight to the front.

As we moved along I began to worry about the certain losses we would experience if we attacked that *cotta* without any artillery.

"Datto Subinga's *cotta* is going to be a tough nut to crack," I said, hoping he would loosen up and give me some idea of the plan he had in mind; but I might as well have saved my breath for he said nothing in reply nor did he even turn his head.

The signs all pointed to our nearing the place. As I remembered it, we had to pass through a narrow gorge where the troopers would have to ride in single file. In a few minutes we were at the mouth of the gorge where I expected the trouble to start, for the old datto was pretty canny and managed to keep himself carefully protected from surprise visits. I was both surprised and relieved when our advance guard rode up to the narrow cleft and signaled all clear. My first feeling of satisfaction, however, was succeeded by a swift doubt. This appeared to be almost too easy and I suspected a trap somewhere.

Galloping ahead, I warned the men on the advance to keep a careful lookout as they went up the narrow trail. But the words were scarcely out of my mouth when a rock rolled down from above, narrowly missing the leading man by a few inches. Another and another followed and then rifles began to crack from farther up the cañon. We pressed back down the trail in a hurry and found that the captain had drawn up the troop and was sitting his horse in chill silence.

"It looks as though it would be a pretty nasty job, Captain," I reported. "We can only move up that narrow trail one man at a time and they can pick us off as fast as we come."

Captain Peady gazed at me in silence for a minute, then his voice came in that queer, flat, strained tone.

"Must get through," he said.

Sergeant Fish was nearby and he edged his horse in.

"Excuse me, Lieutenant, but I think there's another trail that leads over the hills."

If the captain heard him he showed no sign; he continued to sit there like a graven image.

"Do you suppose we could find that trail, Sergeant?" I asked.

"Yes, sir."

Then I turned to the captain again.

"If you'll wait here with the troop, sir," I said, "I'll go ahead with Sergeant Fish and try to locate that trail. It would help us if you would keep up a semblance of an attack here to occupy the Moros' attention."

Taking the captain's silence for assent, I started out with Sergeant Fish. We had gone but a few yards when I heard some one coming behind us and turned around to find the captain following in our rear. I was certain that he had not had time to give any instructions as to the disposition of the troop, so I gal-

loped back once more and told the top sergeant to get his horses under cover, to arrange for outguards and keep up a weak fire on the fellows in the cañon. This done, I caught up once more with Sergeant Fish and the captain, who were skirting along the bottom of the hills. With our orderlies, we were a little group of five men, too small a group entirely to attempt an attack on our own. I figured we could find the trail and send word for the troop to follow.

Suddenly Sergeant Fish halted and pointed to a narrow track which disappeared beyond a jutting rock. It was too steep for the horses and we dismounted and turned them over to the orderlies. Once around the jutting rock we found a small and exceedingly steep slope which led up toward the crest. This we followed, with the captain now taking the lead. The sergeant and I had to pause every so often to catch our wind, but not the captain. He kept right on going.

Up and up we struggled until at last we came to the crest and could look down on the other side. The captain was by this time some forty or fifty yards ahead of us and striding down the slope below. It was my idea to send back word to the troop to follow us on foot. But before I could say a word, Sergeant Fish was on his way, following the captain. I deliberated a moment whether to continue on or go back to the men, and then decided that I had better continue on the way, for the captain had now reached the bottom of the hill and was striding toward the Moro stronghold near the water's edge, where I could hear the stir of many people and see the flash of a light.

I did not dare call after the captain for fear we would rouse the enemy, but I hurried on down the slope as fast as I could go, wondering if it were his intention to walk right into the Moro village. Far off on the right I heard the desultory popping of the rifles from the troop and this cheered me up a little.

As I advanced across the open space toward the Moro stronghold, I began to smell the odor of the place—that peculiar odor of stale fish and even staler humanity with which the none-too-clean Moro loves to surround himself.

I must have been halfway to the *cotta* when I heard the crack of a rifle and a lot of excited yelling. Lights flashed along the wall and a hellish racket broke loose from the village. My heart sank for I was certain now that the captain had been captured and probably Sergeant Fish as well.

I heard sounds in the darkness around me and suddenly the night was alive with menace. I slowed up and halted, hearing the clamor from inside the *cotta*, but also hearing the stealthy pad of bare feet nearer at hand. For a full moment I stood there trying to figure out what was best to do. I was certain now that the captain and Sergeant Fish had been captured. Single handed I could not hope to aid them. It would be better if I went back and brought the troop over that trail. My mind made up, I turned about and made my way back to where that path led over the hill. The nearer I came to it the more I heard movement in the darkness around me.

Finding a dry watercourse, I moved along this and crept slowly to the base of the hill. Now the sounds of movement were directly ahead and above me and I could hear small stones dislodged and the scrape of steel against the hillside. The sound had grown in volume and all of a sudden I knew what was happening.

The Moros were playing the same trick on us that we had played on them. They were quietly sending a force of warriors over that second trail to attack the troop in flank and rear!

V

HERE I paused again in my story. The officers around the court-martial table were drinking in every word. Even Colonel Willie Brandt's pinched face betrayed deep in-

terest and this time he forebore to ask any questions or to glance at his watch. I went on:

With the full knowledge that the Moros were now intent on outflanking our troop in a surprise attack, I did some quick thinking.

I wondered about the two orderlies we had left holding our horses. I had given no explicit orders for them to remain in that spot and they might very easily have come to the conclusion that it was better to rejoin the troop. And then, again, if they did not rejoin the troop, the two of them would start chatting or the horses would stamp around and advertise their presence so that the Moros would easily locate them and, creeping up, cut them down silently.

With those two men out of the running, the way would be clear and the Moros could attack the troop at their leisure, leaping suddenly out of the darkness upon them and butchering any number of men with their razor-sharp *barongs* and *krises*.

All these disquieting thoughts flashed through my mind in a few seconds. I was certainly in a dickens of a quandary. The Moros were still scrambling up the hill above me and by now were probably halfway down the other side. I hoped against hope that the two orderlies would keep on the alert, but I must admit I had very little confidence that they would.

I had much more confidence in old Sergeant Henderson, the top kick. But it was a question in my mind whether he would pay much real attention to this particular flank, knowing that an officer's patrol was out on that side. His confidence in his own officers was likely to prove his ruin, I figured swiftly, but what was I to do now? As far as I could see, there was only one thing to do and that was to get back to my troop as quickly as possible, even if there were a hundred or so Moros between me and my men.

With this idea in mind I moved cautiously toward the foot of the trail. At least I thought I was moving cautiously, but evidently I was not.

I had scarcely covered a yard of ground when something struck me a jolt on the shoulder and a yell went up just in front of me.

The darkness erupted a flood of greasy, smelly bodies. I struck out with fists and feet and tried to dodge the clutching fingers that clawed at my throat and eyes. I could hear more of the enemy hurrying up in the darkness but still I fought, hitting every shadowy form I could see and kicking at various arms that reached out to trip me up. I had the satisfaction of hearing one head snap on its neck and of landing three or four good blows on various faces in the darkness, but the odds were too great. I was jerked off my feet without even time to draw my revolver and it seemed to me that about half the Moros in Jolo were piled on top of me. I can smell them to this day!

At last they began to ease up and I tried to catch my breath, which had been knocked out of me by the fall. My gun had been jerked away from me in the mixup. I felt a sharp pain in my back and found that I was being prodded with a spear to get me up. Somehow I got on my feet and, stumbling along with about six spear points digging at me, I was shoved toward the *cotta* gates.

When we had come nearly to the gate I heard the rifle fire away back in the cañon suddenly swell into greater volume and knew that the Moros who had passed me in the darkness were attacking.

The whole situation was pretty tough, I can tell you, and I cursed myself for having messed things up in such fashion. A great shout went up from the walls of the *cotta* and heads bobbed up on skinny necks as the iron barred gate was flung open. Several mangy dogs rushed out and began yapping at me. Behind them, in a circle of the lantern light, was half the population of the village—men, women and children gaping at me as

though they had never seen a white man before. I noted that the men were, for the most part, old grandfathers and reasoned from this that all the young warriors were out on the trail fighting my troop.

They led me up through a noisome street to a larger building set close to the water's edge. Here I was halted outside the place while some one above me hammered steadily and monotonously at a heavy bronze gong. Men went in and out of this building through the open doorway at the head of a short flight of steps.

Above the clamor of the crowd which pressed around me I could hear the rifles popping from beyond the cañon. Whether it were imagination or not I do not know, but it seemed to me that they were growing weaker and my heart sank as I figured out that the Moros had succeeded in their surprise attack.

Some word came from inside the building after a few minutes and my guards, still too careless with those sharp pointed, broad bladed spears, prodded me up the steps and into a sort of hall. The flickering light from fish-oil lamps showed me the captain and Sergeant Fish under heavy guard at the other end of the hall.

They were standing below an empty bench which rested upon a slightly raised platform like a throne. This was the judgment seat of Datto Subinga, as I well knew, and I wondered where the old man was at the moment, not knowing that his body lay at the bottom of the lagoon somewhere. There were not many people in the hall, but I noted that servants were carrying out bales and bundles and then remembered having seen a lot of activity along the waterfront among the *praus*. If the Moros were preparing to flee, this looked ominous, for it meant that they intended some savagery before departing.

It came over me suddenly that Captain Peady, Sergeant Fish and myself would be the logical victims for whatever they intended. And it also came over me very suddenly that we were hostages and that through us the datto could just about enforce his will on the troop the other side of the cañon.

THERE was a stir at the side of the room and I looked over the heads of the Moros, expecting to see the parchment-yellow skin and smoke reddened eyes of Datto Subinga. Instead of that I saw a husky looking young Moro in skin tight trousers and a crimson, silver buttoned jacket, wearing in his belt the gold and ivory handled *kris* and the gold *buyo* box of authority.

I dimly remembered having seen this fellow before and noting him as the datto's heir. Seeing that *kris* and *buyo* box, and seeing the Moro climb up and sit crosslegged on the throne-like seat, I knew immediately that Datto Subinga must be dead.

But I was hustled up to the foot of the platform alongside Captain Peady, who looked at me without any symptom of recognition, with that same vacant stare in his eyes that I had noted before, a stare that was much more evident in the light of the fish-oil lamps.

There was a whispered conference going on between the new datto and two or three old men who seemed to be his councilors. What it was about I could not tell, but that it concerned us I was very well aware.

I had little time to speculate upon this, however, for two or three of the younger warriors came breathless into the hall and called out something to the datto. Every one began to chatter and jabber at once, and suddenly I heard the sound of firing near at hand. My heart leaped at the good honest crack of Springfield rifles.

The troop had driven the Moros back and were outside the *cotta!* Judging from the sound, the Moros were manning the walls and giving them a good fight.

I saw the datto's eyes resting on me indifferently and for the first time I

realized that I must be a pretty bedraggled specimen. I had been rolled in the filth and the dirt, my nose had bled profusely over my shirt, one cheek was cut and bleeding and my right eye was swelled and probably black and blue by this time. The datto's eye passed on to Captain Peady, who was never a very striking looking figure at the best; and now the captain looked positively halfwitted, for his jaw hung open and his eyes were dull and he swayed a little on his feet.

The datto's eye came to rest finally upon Sergeant Fish, and I could see him sizing up the sergeant with approval. For Sergeant Fish was six feet of trim strength—one of those soldiers whose uniform fitted him like a glove and so neat was he that he always looked just as though freshly turned out of a bandbox. And with it all he had the lean, firm and strong face of a leader of men; and it was to him that the datto addressed his remarks.

"Why do you come here with your soldiers, Tuan, to bring death and trouble upon my people?" he asked.

"You should know the answer to that, Datto. You stole the woman who was to marry me!"

The datto looked startled.

"I, Tuan? I have stolen no woman. I have bought one and paid a heavy price for her."

"When did you buy her?" asked Sergeant Fish quickly.

"Not over a day and a night ago," answered the datto, listening anxiously to the fighting going on outside the walls. I could see that he was worried about the American soldiers.

"From whom did you buy her?" asked Sergeant Fish.

"From the pearl dealer, Ramires," returned the datto composedly. "Who else?"

I saw Sergeant Fish's face go white in anger but his voice was calm enough.

"Datto," he said, "you have bought her from a man who had no right to sell; you will be heavily punished if you do not produce her immediately."

"You say Ramires had no right to sell?" returned the datto, his eyes widening.

"None at all. That is why we are here and that is why your village is being attacked and your warriors killed, and that is why you will be punished."

"So," commented the datto reflectively. "That is a lot of trouble to make on account of one woman." His voice became suave as he listened to the rattle and roar coming from outside the walls. "Perhaps we can arrange this matter." He turned again to his councilors, whispering with them for a space while we three white men stood there listening to the fight outside.

"My councilors say that I should kill you three," announced the datto, "and take the girl away with me and my people in the *praus*. But I say that the Americans will follow us and we will have more trouble."

"You will," returned Sergeant Fish grimly.

"A lot of blood will be shed over one woman," the datto went on, "if we do not arrange the matter in a friendly manner."

"Yes?"

"Yes," returned the datto. "I can think of a better plan than that suggested by my councilors. It seems after all that this woman is of value or else all these white men would not fight for her. And you say the woman is yours. *Bueno!* By taking the woman with me with a promise to kill her if the Americans follow, I save myself from their anger."

Sergeant Fish said nothing, but I saw him quiver.

"On the other hand, there is another plan," continued the datto. "Who are these two white men with you? Are they officers?"

Sergeant Fish nodded.

"*Bueno!*" exclaimed the datto again. "The other plan is that I take one of these officers as hostage and give you the girl."

Sergeant Fish stood there rigid, revolving this thing in his mind. By virtue of his better appearance the datto was treating with him. And the datto had left it up to him whether he should lose Consuelo entirely or have her back once more in his arms at the cost of a few weeks' hardship to Captain Peady or myself. And remember that the sergeant loved the woman.

Personally, had I to make such a decision it would be a pretty hard matter, providing I was in love with the girl and ran the risk of losing her.

And then Sergeant Fish asked a question that had been in the back of my mind.

"How about the other officer?" he said.

"Oh, the other one?" returned the datto. "His head will be sent to the Americans as a warning as to what will happen to the hostage should they attempt to rescue him. I will keep this one—" and he pointed to me—"as hostage. The other one—" and he pointed to Captain Peady—"looks sick anyway, and his head I will send to the Americans."

There was a momentary silence in the hall. Sergeant Fish was called upon to give up the girl he loved or to sacrifice Captain Peady's life to retain her. It was a hard decision to have to make. Remembering the slim and perfect beauty of Consuelo, I realized how hard such a decision must be to the man who loved her. But Sergeant Fish's voice came like the crack of a whip.

"Like hell you will!" he said.

"Ah!" returned the datto. "Then in that case you three will hold off the American soldiers while I and my people depart with the woman. You pledge your word?"

Again there was silence. When Sergeant Fish's voice came at last it trembled slightly.

"I give my word," he said.

And that was the end of the attack on the Moro *cotta* belonging to Datto Subinga's nephew. The strange part of it was that the datto was bluffing all the time.

For Consuelo had killed herself the night before.

VI

THE courtroom was silent as I neared the end of my story. So intent had been Colonel Willie Brandt, that he had not even noticed that the officers had been smoking through the recital. It was Colonel Deevers who spoke up.

"That's a damn good story," he said, "but what the devil has it got to do with the court-martial case we are trying today?"

"It has very much to do with it," I said. "Very much indeed. For after the departure of Datto Subinga's nephew and his people we set fire to the *cotta*, mounted up our men and headed back for Jolo. We got in just before daylight. The sleepy looking sentries at the main gate admitted us in perfunctory fashion and the troop was dismissed, the horses unsaddled and fed and watered and the men went to breakfast."

"I looked over the horses for saddle sores, saw to the care of the wounded and returned to the orderly room. There I found Captain Peady sitting bolt upright in his chair, his head twisted on his neck and snoring stertorously. The orderly room fairly reeked with alcohol. How I ever got him to his quarters I don't know, for he staggered and stumbled like any drunk. Luckily we saw no one and I dumped him into his bunk, took off his blouse and boots and left him sleeping there. I had grown suddenly suspicious as to what had actually happened and I wasted no time in posting down to headquarters and looking up Jimmy Dunnigan, who was regimental adjutant.

" 'Jimmy,' I asked, 'do you know of any secret orders issued to M Troop last night?'

" 'Secret orders? What the devil are you talking about?' retorted Jimmy, looking hot and worried.

" 'Oh, nothing,' I said blandly. 'Nothing at all—except that M Troop went out last night on a lone foray and cleaned up Datto Subinga's place.'

" 'What!' yelled Jimmy. 'Are you crazy with the heat?'

" 'I am not,' I retorted grimly.

"Well, there was the dickens to pay! There wasn't a shadow of an order sending M Troop out on that foray. Jimmy got hold of the captain and questioned him tactfully, but the captain looked absolutely blank and bewildered. The last thing he remembered was sitting before some empty glasses at old man Rubio's.

"Of course, the colonel had to know about it, but the old boy did nothing except grumble a little bit, for it seems that he had wanted Datto Subinga's place cleaned up anyway. So the matter was hushed up all around and nothing ever came of it except that Captain Peady went around with a devil of a head, heart and hand, and was about as friendly as a bear with a sore foot. But he never knew from that day that he had been off the post on the night in question and would have bitterly denied it had anybody accused him, which no one did . . ."

The officers of the court stared at me solemnly as I came to a stop. There was a long silence broken at last by Colonel Willie Brandt's reedy voice.

"Do you mean to say," he asked, "that this captain you speak of drew a —a what did you call it—a blank? And that all these things happened to him while he was under the influence of liquor?"

"I mean to say just that, Colonel."

Little old Willie Brandt sat back in his chair, staring through his big glasses, absolutely nonplused.

"I—I must admit, Major Armstrong, that it is extremely difficult to believe your story. And you say the girl—what was her name—Consuelo—was killed?"

"Yes, Colonel," I said.

"And you mean to say that this Sergeant Fish really believed that he was giving up the girl to save his captain's life?"

"Yes, Colonel."

"Strange, very strange," mumbled the colonel to himself. And then a babble of voices broke out as the story was discussed.

I was thinking of that poor devil, Sergeant Brady, waiting outside for the verdict which might mean anything from death by hanging to a few months in the cells, and I almost regretted having taken so much time to tell the story. The hubbub finally died down; but I could see that even yet the court was fairly evenly divided as to the question of simple manslaughter with its lighter penalty, or the short and ugly find of murder.

"Are you ready to vote on the guilt or innocence of the accused, gentlemen?" Willie Brandt piped up again.

Most of them nodded, but I shook my head.

"If the court doesn't object," I said, "I would like to call in the accused for further cross-examination."

The court did not object and the doors were opened.

Sergeant Brady, the accused, strode in with his shoulders back, ready to hear his doom pronounced, for he was certain by now that the verdict had been decided.

His hands trembled a little as he was told to take the witness stand again.

"Sergeant," I asked, "it is your claim that you drank so much that you did not know what you were doing when you shot this halfbreed, Toribio Sanchez. You have been asked to tell the court what it was that he said to you in the barroom that caused you to go out and drink a lot more. That remark of his might have a very important bearing on this case. Would you mind telling it to the court?"

The sergeant looked at me long and somberly and I saw him swallow hard.

"Yes, sir, I'll tell what it was. He called across the bar to me and he says,

'Well, you so-and-so, you didn't get Consuelo after all, did you?' "

There was no sound in the courtroom except the flutter of paper as the stenographer took down the reply. Every officer in the court was leaning forward, his eyes fixed on the sergeant. I spoke again.

"Sergeant, you claim that you lost all memory of what occurred when you were supposed to have shot Toribio Sanchez. Have you ever known of other men doing things of which they had no knowledge while under the influence of liquor?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you ever known of any officers having done things while they were in that state?"

The answer came more slowly this time—

"Yes, sir."

"Sergeant, one more question: What was the name of that captain who was in command at the time of the taking of Datto Subinga's *cotta*, the captain whose life you tried to save by giving up the woman you loved?"

I think every man in that court knew that something was in the wind. The judge advocate was so curious that he forgot to object to the question. Sergeant Brady was a long time replying.

"Do I have to answer that question, sir?" he asked.

"You don't have to answer it, Sergeant, but it has a very important bearing on this case."

"Very well, sir," he replied in a low voice, and then stared somberly down the length of the table. "His name, sir, was William Brandt."

No one said a word. Every one looked at Colonel Willie Brandt, sitting there at the head of the table, the president of this court-martial. Willie Brandt swallowed hard once or twice and then blinked, peering intently at the sergeant with his nearsighted eyes.

The judge advocate, who had not been in the closed session of the court and had missed the story, knew that there was something in the wind and gazed around the room in puzzled fashion. The counsel for the defense was puzzled as well. Finally the judge advocate cleared his throat and broke the silence.

"Are there any more questions by the court?" he asked timidly.

Some one answered no and every one looked expectantly at Willie Brandt. His voice quavered through the silence again.

"Witness excused," he said jerkily; then, as if impatient, he promptly added, "The court will be cleared."

There followed the shuffling of feet and scraping of chairs as Sergeant Brady, his guards, his counsel, the J.A. and the court stenographer again withdrew. We were left alone with Colonel Willie Brandt.

But the pinched up little face of the colonel betrayed not the slightest sign of any emotion he might have felt. His flat voice simply asked us if we were ready to vote on the guilt or innocence of the accused.

The vote of the court was rendered without a single superfluous word.

Sergeant Brady was found guilty of manslaughter only.

When it came time to vote upon the sentence, as is the custom, the lightest sentence proposed was read first. It prescribed six months' confinement, the minimum possible. And this is the sentence that was voted upon and passed as the sentence of the court.

The queer thing was that this, the lightest punishment proposed, was suggested by Colonel Willie Brandt. But whether hide-bound Willie's soul felt a twinge of gratitude for the man who had saved his life, or whether Willie preferred to have the whole matter closed up and forgotten as quickly as possible, I don't pretend to know. Certainly Willie Brandt never mentioned it again.

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

OF COURSE we never doubted for a moment that any real woodsman would fail to take umbrage at the idea that Paul Bunyan, legendary hero of the big timber, ever went in seriously for oil wells. Listen to James Stevens, Paul's accredited biographer, on this touchy subject:

Detroit, Michigan

Mr. Archie is entirely right. If there is anything that will get an old-time woodsman on the prod it is the idea that Paul Bunyan ever had it in him to sink to such a level that he would drill for oil, punch cows, move dirt or work at any trade except the proud and lofty one of the lumberjack.

Paul's pipeline enterprise was no doubt the source of the slanders that peg him as an oil man. It had nothing to do with oil, however. Paul Bunyan invented the pipeline to get out the logs, which was his single purpose in life.

The invention was the result of Paul's terrible troubles in the country of the corn pines.

IN THE dawn of life in this rare region giant cornstalks had flourished prodigiously, bearing potent ears and dropping them year after year, as pines do their cones. Eventually the soil was a solid mass of fermenting corn. Naturally this fermentation in time produced an earthquake, which heaved up a range of mountains and buried most of the prehistoric land.

But in one valley some of the old seed survived. It crossed with the timber seed of the new age, at last achieving a pine which bore nubbins instead of cones. The soil of the valley was still mashy enough to make the pines look and act like anything but sober trees when the sap rose in summertime.

Then the corn pines looked simply bleary. The trees leaned and sagged against each other. Now and again one would fall in a sprawl on the forest floor. But such a tree was never

broken. It would simply go limp and sag over, its trunk bending, the roots holding. After a snooze, a prone pine would stiffen and wobble up.

IT WAS high summer when Paul moved in. Timber trouble started as soon as the choppers lined up in the woods and unslung their axes. They squared off for labor, spitting on their paws, getting solid footholds, and stooping to drive in their blades.

No doubt it was the broad inviting backs stooped in chopping positions that charmed the trees. Anyhow, every pine that was near a jack suddenly went limp, sagged over and wrapped its bleary boughs about the man's shoulders. Each pine leaned with all its weight. Every man jack in the woods was flattened.

From rim to rim of the vast valley ranks of red-shirted men were bellied on the earth, their calked boots wildly kicking, their paws scratching madly for freedom from the sloppy clutch of the corn pine boughs. But the trees settled down comfortably.

"Solid comfort," the trees seemed to say. "Satisfied."

PAUL BUNYAN was already in action.

"Bounce the cockeyed trees off the men there!" The great logger boomed the command at Babe the Blue Ox. "Give 'em the bum's rush! Bounce 'em up, Babe!"

It was a simple job for Babe. He had such a tail that he could knock down ten acres of standing timber with one switch, and now he proved that he could stand up ten acres of prone pines with a single lick of his tail as well. Soon the jacks were free.

Paul Bunyan grimly sized the timber up. All the pines that had leaned on the choppers were swaying woozily from their roots, and heaving now and again, as though they had the hiccups.

"THE next thing is to sober 'em up," said Paul to Johnny Inkslinger, his timekeeper. "But how? Just how does a body go about it to sober up a pine tree?"

"Maybe we could use cold towels," suggested Johnny helpfully.

"No use, Johnny," said Paul. "There ain't a single tree towel left in camp. I've just got to ponder out a new invention."

And that was how the pipeline was born. Paul Bunyan invented the pipeline to drain the corn pine country and make it go dry. He ran laterals to the tap roots of all the trees. The system was done in a week, and in another week all the pines were sober, self-respecting, upstanding timber. Logging went on. Paul Bunyan left his new invention to the oil men, but he never joined the tribe himself. Heart, soul and hide, he was a woodsman.

I'm sure Mr. Archie can vouch for this history. If I'm not mistaken, it happened in the summer his grandfather broke his leg three feet below the knee. —JAMES STEVENS

THE reporter of the deeds of supermen, as Comrade Stevens unquestionably well knows, is doomed to a martyr's life. Men are by nature skeptical. And the same rare faculty that enables some of us to "see life in the large" often lays us open to the charge of fabricating whoppers. Not that this has any bearing on Frank J. Schindler's representations in the following communication, however:

Berwyn, Illinois

You'll probably chase me out of your office for remarking on the matter of a singing whale, but a singing whale is the first known instance of singing in the bath tub. You know, I once accompanied a singing whale on the piano. Don't laugh. There's no law to compel you to believe it. Neither do I expect you to believe it. A New York column conductor might believe it; they'll believe anything. Nevertheless, it's a good story.

We pulled out of Frisco on the *Shackamicka Maru*—something like that—and we were bound for Haha-why-ee, Kow-eye and points west into what here we call the East. We were going west to get east, in other words. We had a menagerie of ducks, pigeons, rabbits and other animals, with which we put on magical shows for show hungry Americans and Europeans far from the roar of Broadway, Clark Street, Piccadilly Circus, and Rue de la Paix. We also did levitation and made chemical snow, which was a fine trick in the tropics. There were five of us; four men and a woman. I was the band in this outfit; musical director when I had any windjammers to musical direct. Otherwise I played alone. Also, I sometimes playfully shot off a gun, to attract attention to myself for just a fleeting second, during which moment a great feat of legerdemain was perpetrated. The gun shot was important; it saved the trick from being exposed.

I HAVE seen lads come in time after time, trying to get wise to the trick. They would keep their eyes glued on the Maestro, and then, at the psychological moment, I would shoot that damned gun and they muffed the thing on which they were concentrated; all eyes, nerves like fiddle strings, the suspense was terrific—and in that blink of an eyelash the thing was gone.

However, Tommy Cook and his well known sons had a party of tourists aboard this *Maru*, all of whom were going to get a few smells in

Hongkong and other smelly places. A couple of stewards dragged a little piano out on the promenade deck and I was spanking this thing on the ivories and the gals were slinging a mean foot, treading the light fantastic. One gal was gaping out of the window.

"Oh, look at the hump!" she shrieked, and pointed, forgetting that it isn't nice to point.

I GUESS people thought she saw a camel, but the seafaring men said it was a whale, which it turned out to be, as it shot water out of its stem like a small Buckingham fountain. One of the tars said it was blowing, although squirting seemed to be the right word. Anyway, they throttled down the engines, to give people a good view of this animule. Then, it started to sing; at least it made a sound, and the tar who was doing all the explaining said it was singing. I thumped the tone on the piano, and it seemed to be singing in the cracks. Then I put the loud pedal down and socked the tone in a chord, which was F♯. Much to our astonishment, the whale caught this tone and came out of the crack, so to say, and sang, or hummed—hummed "Mother Machree".

Yes, sir. In my long and hectic career, playing for everything from singing seals to warbling sopranos, that was the first time I ever accompanied a whale; that is, except the pudgy 359 pound Italian opera baritone, who sang the toreador song from "Carmen"; and not even in my wildest dreams could I imagine him flaunting a red cloak in a bull's face.

—FRANK J. SCHINDLER

A NOTE on O'Keefe, pirate of the China Sea:

Del Carmen, Pampanga, P. I.

In your September 1st number Paul J. Searles mentions that the pirate O'Keefe is purported to have run a store on the Island of Guam at one time. I have spent nine years on Guam myself, but I have never heard of O'Keefe having ever been on that island.

In 1904 my father ran a plantation on the Island of Saipan, one of the Germani Marianas. Some of our laborers were deported criminals from Yap. One of these was Tamankin, the son of a high chief on Yap, who claimed to have been railroaded away on a trumped-up theft charge, because the then Governor Senf desired his, Tamankin's, Japanese concubine. From Tamankin and others who have spent some time in the Caroline Islands I have it that around 1900 a man by the name of O'Keefe was running a trading station on the Palau Islands; in fact, that he was practically running the whole Island group. O'Keefe is supposed to have settled there during Spanish times. Since Spain never really controlled the group except in name, this means that in O'Keefe's time there was no government, and that he constituted himself as such.

Apparently he did not like the new conditions obtaining after Germany took over control, for he soon after disappeared mysteriously and completely, and has never been heard of since. People there are still speculating whether his schooner in which he left foundered and he was drowned, and if not, why he left as he did and where he went.

I do not know whether the Palau Island O'Keefe is Mr. Searles' man, but I think he is. Shortly before his disappearance he is supposed to have drawn the new government's displeasure upon himself because of some illegal shipping; I don't remember if it was just plain smuggling, or running of arms or liquor. On Palau, O'Keefe was living with two Japanese wives. A Japanese wife seems to have been the height of luxury in those days.

—H. COSTONOBLE

PROBABLY in connection with the recent note in these columns about "Riley Grannan's Last Adventure", one of the most notable funeral orations ever delivered in the United States, and first printed in *Adventure* over two decades ago, a reader sends in the following obituary, contemporary with Reverend Knickerbocker's speech. It appeared originally in the *Sullivan County (N.Y.) Review*, and the reader's clipping comes from the *Baltimore Sun* of July 3rd:

SAM LOBDELL is dead. Some days ago he was stricken with poisoning from a wound in the neck while fighting with his wife when he was drunk. Doctors Grindle, of Eureka, and Buts, of Claryville, were in attendance, but despite their utmost efforts the poison spread until as a last resort they used the knife. The operation was of no avail, however, and now he ain't here any more.

Sam was a unique character. Only once in a generation is a community pestered with such a human viper, such a moral X; he was the unsolved conundrum, "What is he good for?" His only virtue was the stability of his unrepentance. Booze-fighter, liar, wife-beater, chicken thief, egg stealer, dope fiend, profane and vile of speech to the point of nausea, he was the trademark of sin, the sentient emblem of vice, with no crime—but work—beyond his capacity. He was even worse, but he has gone hence, and it is never our inclination to kick a man when he is down.

Yet at his death his proverbial luck was with him. He goes below just as the whitening frosts and chilling winds are ushering in a long and tedious season for the good who are left. As was often the case when in life and in jail, he will keep

warm and comfortable at others' expense. Well, so long, Sam, and so long as it is long, good luck.

Incidentally, those of you who have been unable to procure copies of the booklet containing "Riley Grannan", because of the shortage of available copies here in the office, will be glad to know that a new supply has just been received. The booklet is ten cents a copy, and requests should be addressed to the Adventure Editorial Office, 161 Sixth Ave., New York City.

ANOTHER letter on skunk neighbors and their treatment:

East Orange, New Jersey

It seems to me, if I may be permitted to say so, that Mr. Brice Toole, whose letter appears in the October 1st issue of *Adventure,* is unduly agitated over the presence of skunks about his home—at least, my own experience leads me to feel this way. Let me elaborate:

For three Summers past, my family and I have occupied a cottage on a lake in the hills of Massachusetts, and the surrounding neighborhood is a favorite habitat of skunks. We not infrequently meet them as we walk about in the woods, particularly around dusk, and the space under the back porch is a customary breeding ground. There is usually a family residing there; mother and several young ones.

But there are numerous popular misconceptions about skunks; beliefs which we have found to be erroneous. In the first place, a skunk is not continually odorous; when not agitated in his mind to the extent of setting his atomizer to work, he is as free from odor as any wild animal. In the next place, he is not at all touchy: He wears no chip on his shoulder, but is distinctly sluggish and hard to rouse. The gentleman from whom we rent our cottage, if he meets a skunk in his way, says, "H'lo, Jimmy! Get over there!" And pushes the animal out of his way with a foot, much as you or I would do to a tame and friendly dog.

I ADMIT that I have never tried this, myself, but at all events I do not run a temperature if I meet one going about his lawful occasions. I merely treat him with the same degree of courtesy that I would show to any person or animal I might meet. That is, I do not rush violently at him and kick him off the path or away from in front of the refrigerator, but simply step around him. Nor has any of them ever shown any inclination to resent my presence; none of them has ever stamped his foot at me—a favorite trick—much less baptized me. No, the skunk is a gentleman; he will resent bad treatment (who will not?) but if treated with decent courtesy he reciprocates in kind.

I know of a man who, on the strength of three days' acquaintance, was able to pick up and handle baby skunks while the mother looked on and made no attempt to spray him. No, the skunk is far from irascible, and is very easily tamed if one will take the same trouble—or even much less—as in the case of chipmunks and gray squirrels.

I DO NOT quite see how a skunk can make much trouble for birds or squirrels. He is too clumsy to climb a tree to get at a bird's or squirrel's nest, and he is too big to crawl down a chipmunk's hole. And he is far too sluggish to catch any of these creatures on the ground. At all events, the neighborhood of our cottage is swarming with birds, gray squirrels and chipmunks, none of which seems to pay much attention to the skunks, nor the skunks to them. Even our dog has never had any unpleasant experiences with the skunks. True, we have taught her not to chase wild creatures, and I have seen her lie and watch chipmunks scampering about the porch within six inches of her nose, and make no effort to pursue them, so I imagine she treats the skunks about as the rest of the family does.

Of course, when a skunk goes into action he is unquestionably a humdinger, but if Mr. Toole will simply refrain from kicking them around or chunking them up with firewood I do not see why he should have any trouble.

Incidentally, one of the skunks living in our neighborhood is pure white. I have never been able to get a good look at his eyes, so can not say whether or not he is a true albino, but I imagine that is the case. And he certainly is a very beautiful animal. —PAUL L. ANDERSON

Have you a friend you'd like to introduce to the Camp-fire? Use the coupon on the third cover and a free copy of Adventure *will be sent him.*

Ask Adventure

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

Cat Canyon

THE canyon may exist, but Mr. Wells doubts the presence of the cats.

Request:—"Recently I heard of a canyon in Colorado, said to be near Muirsfield, called Cat Canyon, as all varieties, or most, of the cat family found in the U. S. are said to be found there, some species not found elsewhere.

You may have some information on this, and know whether there is any foundation of fact to it." —E. H. DOUGLAS, Los Angeles, California

Reply, by Mr. William Wells:—I am afraid that Cat Canyon is rather a myth. The three varieties of the cat family found in Colorado are the mountain lion or cougar (*Felis concolor*), the big gray lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) and the wildcat or bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), although there are several sub-specious of these last, differing somewhat in size and markings. Also there is, in the extreme southwestern part, the ringtailed civet cat.

The gray lynx are found in the high mountains among the evergreen timber; the wildcats lower down in the foothills; and it is rare to find gray lynx and wildcats in the same territory, the ranges of the two animals adjoining but rarely overlapping. Mountain lion may be found everywhere.

There used—in the old days—to be a canyon on the north side of Grand River above where the city of Grand Junction, Colorado, now stands, that we called Cat Canyon. It headed up on the Roan or Book Plateau where there were pine and spruce and some gray lynx. Lots of bobcats lower down, also mountain lion, but they must have all been killed out long ago.

The best place to find out anything about wild animals is either the U. S. Forest Service or the U. S. Biological Survey.

The Forest Service issues an annual census of all wild life on the forest reserves, and the Biological Survey keeps close track of all predatory wild animals everywhere.

Gold

FIELD tests for precious metal.

Request:—"How can an average man identify gold? I know a gold piece, but if I found a nugget you would have to show me."

—C. W. CLAPPER, Hudson, New York

Reply, by Mr. Victor Shaw:—Gold can be told from pyrites because it flattens easily, or cuts like tough wax, or lead; but pyrites crumble to dust. No *single* acid effects gold, but pyrites fume. Pyrites change color if sample is shifted in good light; gold stays same color. The above are all good field tests. Even a very minute grain of gold placed inside a fold of paper and hammered will flatten enough to be seen easily.

Motorboat

HOW propeller pitch is figured.

Request:—"How is the pitch on a motorboat propeller figured? By degrees, inches, or what?"

—EDWARD R. MILLER, Yonkers, New York

Reply, by Mr. Gerald T. White:—Propeller pitch is figured in inches and represents the distance the wheel would move ahead in one revolution providing the water was a solid medium and did not slip backward as the wheel went ahead.

Contrary to general opinion, if it were not for a certain amount of slip the boat would not go at all well.

Salamander

DIET and burrow for an amphibian pet.

Request:—"Will you please advise me how to care for and feed a salamander—both Winter and Summer? I am now feeding it a mixture of sugar and water. I have put the salamander into a wooden box containing soil, sand, small plants and stones."

—CAROLYN R. SAUNDERS, Hackettstown, New Jersey

Reply, by Mr. Karl P. Schmidt:—I do not think your salamander will do very well on sugar and water. These creatures may be fed on pieces of meat, earthworms and insects. If kept in a cool place such as sand on cellar floor, your salamander should not need any food during Winter. A piece of good sod in the corner of the salamander box will enable it to burrow. Do not overfeed.

Florida

WHAT to wear in January.

Request:—"My wife wants to know whether summer or winter clothes would be in order in January in Florida."

—RICHARD BUTLER, Madison, Wisconsin

Reply, by Mr. Hapsburg Liebe:—You might hit frost anywhere north of Miami. Florida is not all tropical, as so many think, most of it being sub-tropical. You'll see few coconut palms north of Palm Beach. If it were my wife and I, we would wear what we wore in the North, and if we struck it warm we'd merely leave off wraps and I'd change from heavy to light underwear.

War

THE German prison camps.

Request:—"What were the conditions in the German prison camps during the World War?"

—HARRY RUBENSTEIN, Oakland, California

Reply, by Capt. Glen R. Townsend:—It would be possible to write several pages without, perhaps, touching upon the particular points in which you are interested. Briefly, the camps were usually large enclosures surrounded by barbed wire. The prisoners lived in temporary buildings or barracks, and often, especially on the Eastern Front, were very crowded.

Prisoners were utilized in many kinds of work, and the most unsatisfactory conditions arose in some of the camps where there was insufficient work to keep them reasonably busy. Supplies of food and clothing were both inadequate, of course, because the Germans had an insufficient quantity of both to supply their own people and it could not be expected that they would treat their prisoners better than their own population.

The administration of the camps was reasonably good, and improved as the war lengthened. As with food and clothing, there were seldom sufficient medical supplies, and often a shortage of doctors, so that disease took a heavy toll. With some exceptions these were the result of conditions which the German people could not control, rather than the result of brutality or inefficiency in the conduct of the camps.

Madagascar

NO JOBS for Americans.

Request:—"I would greatly appreciate whatever information you can send me on outdoor opportunities in Madagascar."

—MARTIN BOLAND, San Antonio, Texas

Reply, by Mr. Ralph Linton:—I strongly advise you not to try to get employment in Madagascar, for the following reasons:

It is a French colony and neither the authorities nor local business men are friendly toward foreigners. Very little English is spoken. A thorough knowledge of French would be absolutely necessary for any position. All but the higher administrative positions in companies operating on the island are filled by natives. These make competent clerks and local managers and work for wages too low for a white man to live on.

Business is in the hands of a few large companies, mostly French, which have their headquarters in Europe and which send out men from there. Your chances of picking up a position on the spot are almost nil. My friends in the island write that it is badly hit by the present world wide depression and that all business is retrenching, while many firms have failed.

Sword

BOOKS on edged weapons. The harakiri dagger.

Request:—"I have recently examined a collection of edged weapons, including a Japanese knife, or short sword, which is called a suicide knife. Being a stark amateur in the matter of edged weapons, but nevertheless greatly interested, I am wondering if you might recommend some authoritative book dealing with the subject and also enlighten me on the above mentioned Japanese knife." —L. C. MYERS, Hurley, New Mexico

Reply, by Mr. Robert E. Gardner:—The Japanese *tanto* or *kwaiken,* a sort of dagger about

11 inches in length, was used only for committing hara-kiri and by women for their personal protection.

The following works deal with edged weapons. Unfortunately the average reference library is short on literature dealing with the subject, but perhaps you can secure some of them by purchase:

The Book of the Sword. Richard F. Burton, London, 1884—Memoir on Swords. Colonel Marey, London, 1860—The Sword and the Centuries. Alfred Hutton, London, 1901—The Forms and History of the Sword. Sir Frederick Pollock (Oxford Lectures), London, 1890—Weapons; discourse on hand weapons other than firearms. B. E. Sargeant, London, 1908.

Shoe

WINTER footgear in rough country.

Request:—"Will you please advise me as to what you consider the best type of footgear for all around hiking in rough country, such as wading and fishing small streams and mountain climbing, including glacier work?

Please let me know what you think are the best materials, height, weight, etc. of the shoe? What do you think of hobnails?"

—C. C. KERR, Twisp, Washington

Reply, by Mr. Theodore S. Solomons:—The best footwear for all around hiking in rough country and in mountain climbing is the high shoe, made of leather, with Hungarian (not hob) nails set around the edge of the soles about three to an inch and with perhaps a dozen or more all told spaced over the sole, the heel to have a few also where you are most inclined to run them. If such a shoe is made of the very best leather, not too heavy in the uppers and with the sort of sole called "double" in city shoes, and is provided with holes instead of hooks, and is well waterproofed and *kept soft* by working and greasing, especially after being in water, and never dried too fast or too close to a fire, and fits your foot comfortably, neither too tight nor too loose, you will have the best sort of footgear for all general purposes in a cold climate.

The effort to keep the feet dry is a mistake. Sweat prevents dryness in any shoe, especially a rubber one, and provided you do not stand around in a wet shoe you will neither take cold nor be uncomfortable, for the shoe will dry itself in ordinary use, after getting perhaps a little wet inside in wading a stream, fishing, walking over ice or snow. No footwear possesses the all round advantages of such a shoe.

If you prefer, you can use a full length leather lace shoe, but they tend to sweat the calf and are harder to put on and off and handle generally. Many factories put out such a shoe, but if you can find a custom maker and have him make you a pair to fit and pay him for selected leather and new, strong thread, that is preferable. Have either two pair, or an ordinary light pair for camp and emergencies. Watch your shoes; they are the vital part of your outfit. In cold countries the moccasin, shoe pack and felt shoe (in dry cold) may be used, the latter being a splendid shoe in dry going. The light rubber knee-boot is best when continuous wading is necessary, or an Eskimo mukluk. A lot of big hobnails makes a skating surface, a heavy shoe, and rots the leather.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

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4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

A complete list of the "Ask Adventure" experts appears in the issue of the fifteenth of each month

The POST *in the* STEPPE

By HAROLD LAMB

Before Harold Lamb was known as the author of such distinguished books as "Tamerlane", "Genghis Khan" and "The Crusades", he had become one of Adventure's *most popular writers with his glamorous tales of the Don Cossacks.*

"The Post in the Steppe", a long novelette marking his return to his earlier field, is one of his very best!

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